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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

PARISIAN LIFE

VOLUME VIII

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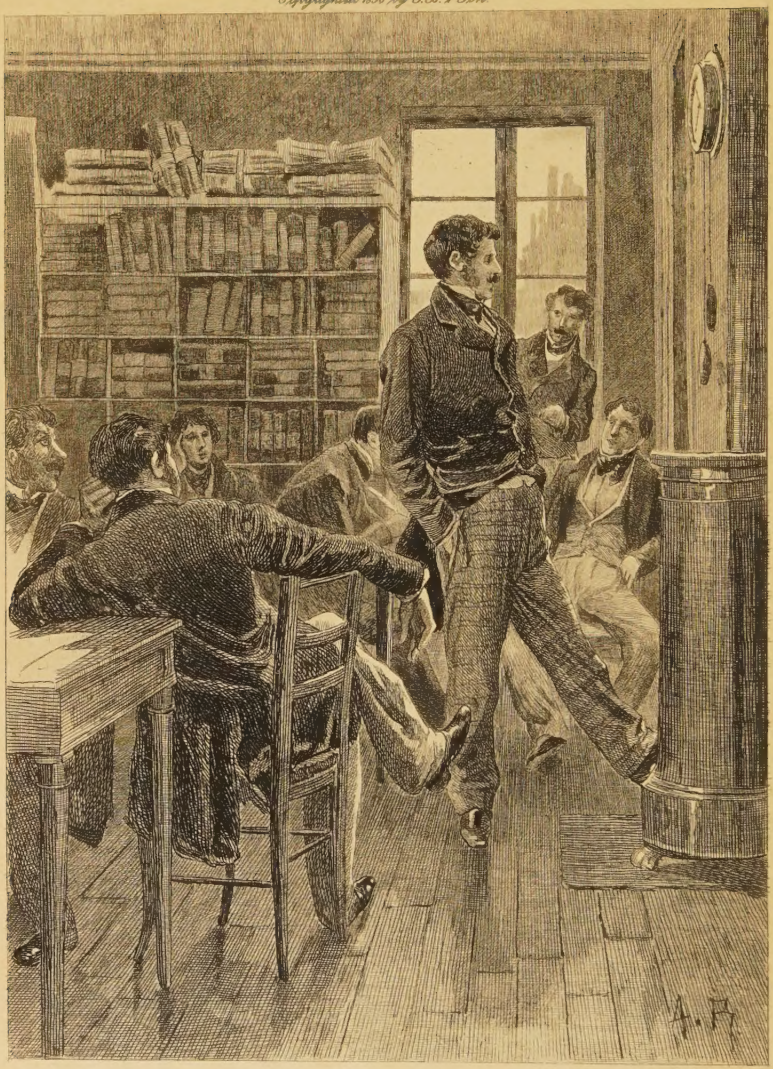

BIXIOU

Standing in front of the stove, turning up the sole of one boot at a time to dry it at the opening.

BALZAC

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie Humaine* by HONORÉ DE BALZAC, now for the first time completely translated into English.

THE CIVIL SERVICE. GAUDISSART II. A PRINCE OF BOHEMIA. IN ONE VOLUME. TRANSLATED BY MARY W. ARTOIS AND JANE MINOT SEDGWICK, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH FOUR ETCHINGS.

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THE CIVIL SERVICE

TO THE COMTESSE SERAFINA SAN SEVERINO, NÉE PORCIA

Being obliged to read everything in order to avoid repetition, I have lately skimmed through three hundred stories,—all more or less humorous,—of *il Bandello*, a writer of the XVI. century, who is little known in France. His entire works were last published in Florence in the compact edition of *Conteurs italiens;* your name as well as that of the Comte, brings you as vividly before me as though you were here in reality; Madame, I was looking over the original text of *il Bandello* for the first time, and I found, not without surprise, that each story, although it might be only five pages long, was dedicated by a familiar letter to the kings, queens, and most brilliant personages of the times, among whom may be noted the nobles of Milan, of Piedmont, which was the native land of *il Bandello,* of Florence and of Genoa. This is to say the Dolcini of Mantua, the San Severini of Crema, the Visconti of Milan, the Guidoboni of Tortona, the Sforza, the Doria, the Frégose, the Dante Alighieri —one of whom is still living—the Frascator, Queen Marguerite of France, the Emperor of Germany, the King of Bohemia, Maximilian, Archduke of Austria, the Medici, the Sauli, Pallavicini, Bentivoglio of

Bologna, Soderini, Colonna, Scaliger, the Cardone of Spain. In France, the Marigny, Anne de Polignac, Princesse de Marsillac and Comtesse de Rochefoucauld, Cardinal d'Armagnac, the Bishop of Cahors, in fact all the great people of the times, were happy and flattered by their correspondence with the successor of Boccaccio. I also saw how much nobility of character *il Bandello* possessed. If he has adorned his work with these illustrious names, he has not been forgetful of the interests of his personal friends. After the Signora Gallerana, Comtesse de Bergamo, comes the physician to whom he dedicated his story of *Romeo and Juliet,* after the *Signora Molto Magnifica* Hipolita Visconti ed Atellana, comes the simple captain of light cavalry, Livio Liviano, after the Duc d'Orleans comes a preacher; after a Riario, comes *Messer Magnifico* Girolamo Ungaro, *Mercante lucchese,* a virtuous man of whom he recounts how *un gentiluomo navarese sposa una che era sma sorella e figlinola, non lo sapendo,* a subject sent to him by the Queen of Navarre. I thought that I could,—like *il Bandello,* —place one of my tales under the patronage of *una virtuosa, gentillissima, illustrissima contessa,* Serafina San Severino, and tell her truths which might be mistaken for flatteries. Why not acknowledge how proud I am to testify here and elsewhere that to-day as well as in the XVI. century, writers, irrespective of their contemporaries, are recompensed for calumnies, injuries, and bitter criticisms by the beautiful and noble friendships whose support help

to vanquish the ennuis of a literary career? Paris, the brain of the world, has pleased you so much in consequence of the continual fluctuation of its wit. It has been so well understood by the Venetian delicacy of your intelligence; you have so well loved the rich salon of Gérard which we have lost, and where were to be seen, as in the work of *il Bandello,* European illustrations of this quarter of the century; then the brilliant fêtes, the enchanted inaugurations which this grand and dangerous siren ordains have also greatly astonished you; you have expressed your opinions so naively that, without doubt, you will take under your patronage the description of a world which you could not know, but which, nevertheless, does not lack originality. I would have preferred having some beautiful poetry to offer you, to you who have as much poetry in your soul and in your heart as your person expresses, but if a poor prose writer can only give what he has, perhaps he will be able to redeem in your eyes the mediocrity of the offering by the respectful homage of one of those profound and sincere admirations which you inspire.

DE BALZAC.

THE CIVIL SERVICE

*

In Paris, where studious and thoughtful men bear some resemblance to each other in consequence of their living in the same environment, you have no doubt met several persons resembling Monsieur Rabourdin, whom this story introduces. He was at this time head clerk in one of the most important departments. He was a man forty years of age, his hair was a pretty shade of gray,—which women really sometimes admire,—and served to soften his sad face. His eyes were blue and full of fire, his complexion still clear, but red and disfigured by several very angry blotches. He had a good forehead and a Louis XV. nose, a serious mouth, a tall figure, thin or rather wasted like that of a man recovering from an illness. In fact his appearance was a cross between the laziness of a loiterer and the thoughtfulness of a very busy man. If this description gives an idea of his character, his dress will perhaps contribute to bring it out in greater relief. Rabourdin usually wore a blue coat, a white cravat, a vest crossed à la Robespierre, black trousers without straps, gray silk stockings and low

shoes. After having been shaved, he partook of a cup of coffee at eight every morning, and then went out, regularly as a clock, and walked through the same streets on his way to the department. He was so cleanly and neatly dressed that he could have been very easily mistaken for an Englishman on the way to his embassy. From these, his chief characteristics, you would imagine him the father of a family harassed by annoyances in the midst of his household, or worried by the monotony of the department, but at the same time enough of a philosopher to take life as it is; an honest man loving his country and serving it, without hiding from himself the obstacles to be met with in wishing to do well; prudent because he understood men; exceedingly polite to women, because he expected nothing from them; in fact a man of great acquirements, affable to his inferiors, holding his equals at a great distance, and carrying himself with great dignity toward his superiors. At the time when this story begins, you would have remarked that he had the cold, resigned air of a man who had buried the illusions of youth, who had renounced his cherished ambitions, you would have recognized a discouraged man, yet one who had not lost his interest in life, and one who still persevered in his original plans, more in order to employ his mind than in the hopes of a doubtful triumph. He had not even one decoration, and he accused himself of weakness in having worn that of the *Fleur de lis* during the early days of the Restoration.

The life of this man presented mysterious peculiarities. He had never known his father. His mother was a woman devoted to luxury, always stylishly dressed and always in holiday mood. She had a rich equipage. Her beauty seemed marvelous as he remembered her, although he rarely saw her. She left him scarcely anything, but she gave him that very trivial and incomplete education which produces high ambition, but little ability. At sixteen years of age, some days before his mother's death, he was taken from the Lycée Napoléon to become a supernumerary in an office, in which some unknown benefactor had obtained him a footing. When twenty-two years of age Rabourdin was first-assistant, and at twenty-five he became the principal. Since that time the hand which helped the boy on in the world only made itself felt on one occasion; this unseen hand led him, a poor boy, to the house of Monsieur Leprince, an elderly appraiser, a widower, who was said to be very rich and to have an only daughter. Xavier Rabourdin fell desperately in love with Miss Célestine Leprince, who was at that time seventeen years of age, and who had the expectation of having a marriage portion of two hundred thousand francs. This young woman, who was carefully brought up by her mother, an artist, from whom she inherited all her talents, was calculated to attract the attention of men in the highest positions in life. She was large, beautiful and exceedingly well-formed, spoke several languages and had a slight knowledge of science, a

dangerous acquisition which requires skilful management on the part of a woman to avoid becoming pedantic. The mother, blinded by misdirected tenderness, had given her daughter too great hopes for her future. According to her, a duke, an ambassador, a marshal of France, or a secretary of state alone could give her Célestine her proper place in society. This young girl had also the manners, the speech, the appearance of fashionable society. Her toilet was richer and more costly than was suitable for an unmarried woman. She had everything, so that there was nothing left for a husband to give her, but happiness. And yet her mother, who died a year after the marriage of her daughter, had petted her so that the lover had no easy task in pleasing her. How much firmness would be needed to control such a woman! The bourgeois became alarmed and retired. Xavier, orphan as he was, without money except what he earned in his position as head man in the office, was proposed by Monsieur Leprince to Célestine as a suitor, but she resisted for some time. Mademoiselle Leprince had no objection to this suitor; he was young, very much in love with her, and quite fine looking, but she hated the name of Madame Rabourdin. Her father told her that he was of the stock of which secretaries of state are made. To this Célestine replied that a man with the name of Rabourdin could never amount to anything under the government of the Bourbons, etc., etc. Her father, finding himself hard pressed, made the great mistake of stating

to his daughter that her future husband would be Rabourdin *with a title*, even before the age required to enter the Chamber; that Xavier ought soon to be maître des requêtes and secretary general of the department in which he was engaged. By these two stepping-stones this young man would attain to the higher places of the administration. He would become rich and possess a name transmitted to him by a certain will, known to him. The marriage was consummated.

Rabourdin and his wife dreamed of the mysterious power and the promotion suggested by the old appraiser. Carried away by the buoyant spirits and carelessness in money matters, characteristic of young married people who are greatly in love, Monsieur and Madame Rabourdin spent—during the first five years of their married life—nearly one hundred thousand francs of their capital. Célestine, naturally alarmed that her husband had not been promoted, wished to take the hundred thousand francs which remained of her marriage portion and invest it in land. Such an investment would bring but little income, but at some future day they would feel recompensed for all their wise economies by inheriting the estate of Monsieur Leprince. When the elderly appraiser saw his son-in-law deprived of his patron, he tried, out of love for his daughter, to repair this loss,—which they had endeavored to conceal,—by risking a part of his fortune in a speculation which offered very advantageous inducements; but the poor man injured by the failure of

the firm of Nucingen, died of grief, leaving only ten beautiful pictures which ornamented his daughter's salon, and some antique furniture that she put in her garret. After eight years of waiting in vain Madame Rabourdin was at last convinced that the paternal protector of her husband must have died suddenly, and that his will was either suppressed or lost. Two years before the death of Leprince the place of head of division having become vacant, had been given to a Monsieur de la Billardière, a relative of an influential deputy of the Right, made minister in 1823. This was enough to tempt him to leave his position. But how could Rabourdin give up eight thousand francs of salary voluntarily, when he had been accustomed to spend that sum on his household, and which formed three-quarters of his income? Besides after a few more years of patience, would he not have the right to a pension? What a fall for a woman whose great pretensions in early life had some foundation, and who in addition was thought to be a superior woman!

Madame Rabourdin fulfilled the expectation which she gave as Mademoiselle Leprince. She possessed elements of an apparent superiority which pleases the world. She was so well educated that she could address every one in his own language. She really was talented, she showed a high and independent spirit; her conversation was captivating in consequence of the variety of subjects she could discuss, as well as for her original ideas. These qualities, useful and appropriate in a sovereign, or in the

wife of an ambassador, were not very useful in housekeeping, where everything is commonplace. People who are gifted speakers need an audience, their love of talking at great length often makes them tiresome. In order to satisfy her love of society Madame Rabourdin set apart one day in the week as her day at home, and she went out in society as much as possible, so that she might there taste the enjoyments so pleasing to her vanity. Those who are acquainted with Parisian life will know how much a woman of this disposition must suffer by having her ambition thwarted in her home by the lack of means. Notwithstanding all the silly speeches about money, it is always necessary, in living in Paris, to curb ambition within one's income, to render homage to accounts and to kiss the cloven hoof of the golden calf. What a problem! An income of twelve thousand francs to defray the expenses of a household composed of father, mother, two children, an upstairs-girl and a cook, all living on the second floor of a house in Rue Duphot, in an apartment the rent of which was a hundred louis! Before adding up all the expenses of the house let us deduct the wardrobe and the equipage belonging to Madame Rabourdin, for of all these items her wardrobe was the most costly. Let us now see what remained for the education of the children, a girl of seven and a boy of nine, whose maintenance —notwithstanding that the schooling was entirely free—cost as much as two thousand francs; you can easily see that Madame Rabourdin could scarcely

give thirty francs a month to her husband. Nearly all Parisian husbands are in that situation unless they pose as monsters. This woman who thought herself calculated to shine in the world, in fact to rule it, saw herself forced to use her thoughts and her talents in an insignificant struggle which she had not foreseen, in curbing her desires to correspond with her account book. Even now, how greatly did her self-conceit suffer! She had dismissed her man-servant upon the death of her father. Most women would have become wearied with this daily economy, they would have complained, and at last yielded to their lot; but instead of sinking under its weight, Célestine's ambition thrived under difficulties, which unable to conquer, she set herself to work to remove. In her eyes, these impediments in her path were like the Gordian knot which it was impossible to untie, but which genius could cut. Far from reconciling herself to a place in the middle classes, she fretted at the hindrances in the way of her ambitions by accusing fate of deceiving her. Célestine really believed that she was a superior woman. Perhaps she was right, perhaps she would have been great, had great occasions presented themselves, perhaps she was not in her right place. Let us acknowledge that there are types of women as well as of men, whom society fashions to suit its pleasures. Now in social laws as in natural laws, there are more young shoots than there are trees, more spawn than fully developed fish. Many people of talent, like Athanase

Granson, are doomed to die withered like seeds which fall on the bare rock. It is true that there are women who devote themselves to housekeeping, women whose chief talent lies in being agreeable, women devoted to luxuries, women who are merely wives, or mothers, or lovers, women purely spiritual or entirely worldly; the same as there are artists, soldiers, artisans, mathematicians, poets, merchants, also people who devote themselves to finance, agriculture or the art of governing. Moreover the strangeness of events leads to contradictions; many called and few chosen is a law of the city as well as of Heaven. Madame Rabourdin imagined herself quite capable of guiding a statesman, of inspiring the soul of an artist, of furthering the interests of an inventor, and of helping him in his struggles, of devoting herself to the wise financiering of a Nucingen, of doing honor to a large fortune. Perhaps she would in this way explain her great dislike of going over the washing list, the daily kitchen accounts, the petty calculations and cares necessary in managing a small house. She made herself superior only in doing those things which gave her pleasure. In feeling so keenly the thorns of a position which might be compared to that of Saint Lawrence on his gridiron, must she utter no murmur? Indeed, in the paroxysms of her thwarted ambition, in the moments when her wounded vanity caused her sharp pangs, Célestine berated Xavier Rabourdin. Was it not her husband's duty to place her in a suitable position? If

she had only been a man, she would indeed have had the energy to make a fortune quickly in order to make a beloved wife happy! She reproached him with being a too conscientious man. In the mouth of some women this accusation is an accusation of imbecility. She drew for him superb plans, in which she ignored all the obstacles which men and circumstances bring to bear upon them; furthermore, like all women stirred with violent emotion, she became, in thought, more crafty than a Gondreville, and more licentious than Maxime de Trailles. Célestine's mind thought of everything, and she gave full play to the expansion of her ideas. On hearing these beautiful fancies, Rabourdin, who knew the working of things, remained unmoved. Célestine, saddened, thought her husband narrow-minded, timid, of limited comprehension and so insensibly had a very false opinion of her companion in life; at first she stunned him by the brilliancy of her argument; then, by her ideas, which came to her like flashes of lightning. She stopped him short when he began to give an explanation, so that she would not lose a particle of her enthusiasm. From the earliest days of their marriage, Célestine, feeling that she was loved and admired by Rabourdin, was entirely unreserved with her husband; she paid no attention to the deference due to him nor to familiar politeness, in demanding in the name of love, pardon for all her little faults; and as she never corrected them, she continued to rule over him. Under these

circumstances a man finds himself toward his wife like a child before his teacher, when it never occurs to him to think that the child whom he ruled over when little may now have grown up. Like Madame de Staël, who called out in a drawing-room full of people to a *plus "grand homme"* than she: "Do you know that you have just said something very wise!" Madame Rabourdin said of her husband: "He occasionally is somewhat clever." The dependence in which she continued to hold Xavier was shown by almost imperceptible movements of her face. Her attitude and her manners expressed her lack of respect. Without knowing it she injured her husband; for in all countries, before judging a man, the world listens to his wife's opinion of him, and in this way asks what the inhabitants of Geneva call, *un préavis*—pronounced in the language of that country *préavisse*.—When Rabourdin saw the faults which love led him to commit, his decision was made, he suffered in silence. Like some men in whom sentiment and intellect are equally balanced, who possess at the same time a noble soul, and a nicely balanced brain, he became the advocate of his wife's ideas before the tribunal of his own judgment. He said that nature had destined her to play a rôle lost through his own fault. She was like an English thoroughbred horse, a racer attached to a wagon full of stones, and she suffered in consequence; thus he blamed himself. Besides, by dint of repetition, his wife had imbued him with the thought that she was infallible. Exchange of

thoughts is contagious in the home-circle: the ninth Thermidor is, like many great events, the result of female influence. Thus pushed on by Célestine's ambition, Rabourdin had for some time dreamed of satisfying it, but these hopes he hid from his wife, so that she would not be further grieved should he fail. This well-meaning man resolved to force his way up in the administration by a bold stroke. He wished to bring about one of those revolutions which place a man at the head of any political party. But finding himself incapable of overturning things for his own advantage, he turned his attention to useful thoughts and strove for a triumph which he intended to obtain by honorable means. There are few government officials who have not conceived this brilliant and generous idea, but with them as with artists many more of their plans come to naught than materialize. As Buffon says: "Genius consists in patience."

Placed in a position where he could study the French Government and observe its mechanism, Rabourdin laid his plans in the midst of the field of labor in which chance had placed him, which, let me emphasize, is the secret of much human accomplishment. In his case it culminated in his inventing a new system of government. Knowing the men with whom he had dealings, he respected this machine which worked then, works now, and will continue to work for a long time to come, for everyone is frightened at the thought of reorganizing it; but, according to Rabourdin's ideas, no one should

refuse to try to make it more simple in its construction. In his opinion the problem to be solved lay in the better employment of the forces already in use. The simplest solution of this plan would be to revise the taxes in such a way that the state would lose no revenue, and to obtain by a budget,—equal to the budget which now calls forth many foolish discussions,—results twice as great as the present results. By long practice Rabourdin had observed that in everything perfection is the result of simple but sudden changes. To economize is to simplify. To simplify is to do away with useless machinery. There would then be vacancies in the department. His system of government therefore depended on abolishing the prevailing classification, he would give a new nomenclature to his administration. This perhaps is the reason that innovators are so disliked. These removals necessary in perfecting the plan are at first not well understood, they threaten those who do not lend themselves easily to changed conditions. What really made Rabourdin a great man was the fact that he restrained the enthusiasm which takes possession of all inventors, and that he searched patiently for an expedient adapted to every circumstance which would avoid shocks, by leaving to time and experience the task of demonstrating the value of every change. The grandeur of the result would make the undertaking seem impossible, if one lost sight of the central thought in the rapid analysis of this system. It is not then irrelevant to indicate, after these

explanations, however incomplete they may be, the point of view from which he set out to embrace the administrative horizon. This tale, which is elsewhere confined to the heart of the intrigue, will perhaps explain some of the bad customs now prevalent.

Deeply moved by the grievances which he recognized in the life of the government employés, Xavier asked himself why they were treated with such increasing lack of consideration; he searched for the causes and found them to be those little partial revolutions which were like the ruffled waters during the tempest of 1789, and which historians in treating of the great social events fail to examine, although in fact they have formed our manners, such as they are.

In olden days under the monarchy, the army of government employés did not exist. These clerks were very few and they obeyed the orders of a prime-minister, who was always in communication with the sovereign, and they thus served the king almost directly. The chiefs of these zealous public servants were simply called *premiers commis*. In those branches of government which the king could not manage unaided, such, for instance, as the farming of taxes, the clerks bore to their chiefs the same relation that the clerks of a commercial house bear to their employer. They learn a science which ought to assist them in making their fortune. Thus the smallest point of the circumference was drawn toward the centre and received life from it. The

result was devotion and confidence. Since 1789 the state, *the country*, if you prefer, has replaced the prince. Instead of being promoted suddenly to the rank of chief magistrate, clerks have—notwithstanding our fine ideas of our country—become simply the *employés of the government*, and the heads of the departments are blown about at every caprice of a power called *the ministry*, and do not know at evening where they will be the next morning. The man who keeps up to the times should always have his wits sharpened, he lords it over a certain number of necessary clerks whom he dismisses at pleasure, while these employés try to keep their positions. The bureaucracy, a gigantic power manipulated by dwarfs, is thus created. If Napoléon was in this way—by making everything and all mankind subordinate to his will—able to hold back for a moment the influence of the bureaucracy, that heavy curtain hung between the good to be done and he who commands it, it was definitely organized under the constitutional government, inevitably the friend of mediocrity, the great admirer of well approved documents and accounts, in fine, as meddlesome as a middle-class woman. Happy to have seen the ministers of state in constant struggle with four hundred smaller minds, with ten or twelve ambitious and dishonest leaders, civil service officials immediately become necessary by the substitution for action of written decrees, and they create a power of inertia called a report. Let us explain what a report is.

When kings had ministers,—which has only been from the reign of Louis XV.,—they caused reports to be made on important questions, instead of holding, as in olden times, council with the chief men of the state. Insensibly, ministers of state were led by their administration to imitate the king. Being engaged in defending themselves before the two Chambers and before the court, they allowed themselves to be in leading-strings to the report. Nothing important took place in the administration, even requiring most urgent action to which the minister did not reply, "I have asked for a report." The report then bore the same relation to business and to the minister that the report of the Chamber of Deputies did to the laws:—one document where the arguments pro and con are treated with more or less partiality. The minister as well as the Chamber finds everything laid down in the report. Every view of the subject is instantly taken. Whatever happens, the time will come when the decision must be made. The more arguments pro and con, the less likely is the judgment to be unbiased. The most beautiful things in France were accomplished in the days when there were no reports, and when decisions were spontaneous. The law which governs the statesman is to draw up precise formulas in every case, after the manner of judges, and physicians. Rabourdin said to himself, "One gains the position of minister by his power of decision, his knowledge of business and how to transact it." He saw that the report has full sway

in France from the colonel to the marshal, the commissary of police to the king, from the prefects to ministers of state, from the Chamber of Deputies to the law. From the year 1808 everything was discussed, was weighed, was balanced by speeches and written arguments. Everything took some literary form. France was going to ruin notwithstanding these beautiful reports, for things were discussed which instead required immediate action. A million reports were then written in France annually! In this fashion bureaucracy reigned! Law documents, parchments, papers were the props of the structure without which France would be lost, the circular without which she could not advance, grow, became more expansive and more elaborate. The bureaucracy henceforth used for its own profit the discrepancies between the receipts and the expenses. The administrator was blamed so that the administration might be exonerated. At last Lilliputian threads were discovered which drew France, as by a chain, to Paris as the central power, as if France, from 1500 to 1800, had undertaken nothing without thirty thousand clerks. In attaching itself to public offices like a mistletoe to a pear-tree, the clerk indemnified himself fully and in the following manner:

The ministers of state, obliged to obey the Princes or Chamber of Deputies, by whom they are ordered to prepare certain portions of the budget, and forced to maintain some workers, cut down the salaries, and increased the offices,

believing that the more people employed by the government, the stronger would the government be. The contrary is a written law of the universe. There is no other energy apart from that of active principles. The mistake of the excessive administration of the Restoration has been proved by events which happened about July, 1830. In order to plant a government in the heart of a nation, it is necessary to attach to it *interests* and not *men*. The government clerk despised the government which lessened at the same time his importance and his salary, and treated him in the same manner that a courtesan treats an aged lover. It gave him work in return for his salary; a state of affairs as intolerable for the administration as for the clerk, if each had dared to feel the other's pulse, or had those drawing large salaries not stifled the voices of those whose salaries were small. The clerk occupied solely in maintaining himself, in keeping his position and in receiving his pension, believed himself justifiable in obtaining this great result. This state of things encouraged the clerk to be servile, he concocted perpetual intrigues in the various departments of the government, when the poor clerks struggled against a degenerate aristocracy who came to pasture on the commons belonging to the middle classes, by insisting on having places for their ruined children. A superior man could with difficulty walk along these tortuous paths, bow, cringe, slide in the mire of these sinks of vice where remarkable faces frighten every one. An ambitious

genius would grow old while trying to gain the triple crown, he does not need to imitate *Sixtus Fifth* in order to become chief of the department. Only the lazy, the incapable, or the intensely stupid stay there long enough to arrive at that distinction. Thus the mediocrity of the French administration was slowly established. These government officials being entirely composed of men of small minds form an obstacle to the prosperity of the country. For seven years they withheld the plans for a canal which would have stimulated the production of a province. Frightened at everything, they postpone indefinitely, perpetuating those abuses which perpetuate and consolidate its methods. Bureaucracy holds every one, even the head of the department, in leading-strings. It puts down men of talent who are brave enough to try to do without its aid or who endeavor to enlighten it in regard to its faults. The pension book had just been published. In it Rabourdin saw the name of an office-boy put down for a sum larger than that given to old colonels covered with wounds. In this can be read the entire history of the administration. Another evil engendered by modern morals, can be counted among the causes of this secret demoralization. In the administration at Paris there is in reality no subordination, complete equality reigns between the head of an important division and the humblest official: one is of as much consequence as the other in an arena which is only entered as a place from which to seek

other positions, for these clerks are recruited from the ranks of poet, artist, or merchant. These employés criticise each other without reserve.

Does not education equally, liberally distributed without measure among the masses now lead the son of a door-keeper of the minister of state to decide the fate of a man of merit or of large property by whom his father was employed as door-keeper? The last comer can thus contend with the oldest official. A rich supernumerary splashes his chief, as he drives to Longchamps in his tilbury in which is seated a beautiful woman, to whom he says, "There is my chief," at the same time indicating by a movement of his whip, the poor father of a family going on foot. The Liberals call this state of things PROGRESS. Rabourdin saw ANARCHY at the heart of this power. As a result of this state of things did he not see disturbing intrigues like those which take place in the seraglio, between the eunuchs, the women and the imbecile sultan, or the little quarrels of nuns, full of secret vexations, or college tyrannies, diplomatic schemes, fit to frighten an ambassador undertaken for a fee or for an increase of salary; it all resembles the jumping of fleas harnessed to a pasteboard cart; the enmity of a negro shown toward the minister of state himself; then there are other men, who are really useful, the workers,—victims of these parasites; men devoted to their country who stand prominently forth beyond the incapable throng, these are obliged to succumb to ignoble and treasonable plots. All the

high places are to be obtained by parliamentary influence alone and no longer from royalty. The clerks of departments find themselves sooner or later in the condition of a wheel screwed on to a machine; the only variation of their lot is to be more or less oiled. This fatal conviction, already perceived by bright minds, effectually stifles the statements conscientiously written on the secret evils of the country, effectually disarms courage, corrupts those who had the strictest regard for honesty, fatigued as they were by injustice and induced to become careless by destructive ennuis. A clerk in the employ of Rothschild Brothers corresponds with all England, a single government official can correspond with all the prefects; but here where one goes to learn how to make his fortune, another loses in useless endeavor his time, his life and his health. Hence comes the mischief. Certainly a country will not be immediately menaced with death because a talented government official retires and a man of mediocre ability takes his place. Unhappily for nations no one man is indispensable to their existence. But in the long run, when talent in every department is diminished, the nations must disappear. Everyone who has read can find instruction in Venice, Madrid, Amsterdam, Stockholm and Rome, places where once great power reigned, and see them now destroyed by the small ideas which filtered into them while they were gaining their power. On the day of conflict, everything having been found in a weak condition, the

state yielded to a slight attack. To adore the fool who succeeds, to feel no sorrow for the fall of a man of talent, is the result of our sadly misdirected education and our customs, which put talented men to ridicule, and drive genius to despair. But what problem is more difficult to solve than that of the re-establishment of the civil service at a time when liberalism cried out through the newspapers in all industrial workshops that the salary of government officials constituted a perpetual robbery, when liberalism compared the headings of the chapters of the budget to a cluster of leeches, and every year asked the gain of the thousand million francs of taxes spent? In Monsieur Rabourdin's eyes the employé, in relation to the budget, held the same position that the gambler holds to the game; everything that he wins, he risks again. All large salaries imply an equivalent. Is it not organizing robbery and misery to pay a man a thousand francs a year for his entire services? A convict costs the government almost as much and he does less work. But this government desires that a man to whom it gives twelve thousand francs a year in return for his devotion to his country would thereby make a contract profitable for both, which would inspire him to do his best.

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These reflections had thus led Rabourdin to try to remodel the staff. To employ fewer clerks, to triple or double their salaries and to abolish pensions; to employ young clerks as did Napoléon, Louis XIV., Richelieu and Ximénès, but to keep them a long time by holding out inducements of high places and great honors, these were the chief points in a reform as useful to the state as to those employed in its service. It is difficult to relate in detail, chapter by chapter, a plan which embraced the budget and which descended into the smallest details of the administration to carry out these principles; but perhaps one instance of these great reforms will suffice for those who understand as well as for those who are ignorant of the administrative constitution. Although the position of a historian may be dangerous in relating a plan somewhat resembling politics made by the fireside, yet it is necessary to portray it, so as to explain the man by his deeds. By suppressing the recital of these deeds, you would not be able to believe the narrator under oath, if he had contented himself with merely stating the talent or audacity of this chief of the department.

Rabourdin's plan divided the government into three divisions. He thought that, if formerly there had been men of a sufficient ability to grasp

at once, domestic and foreign affairs, France to-day would not lack a Mazarin, a Suger, a Sully, a Choiseul, a Colbert, to direct a government even greater than that which now exists. Besides, constitutionally speaking, three ministers of state would agree better than seven. Then it is also less difficult to make a mistake in choosing them. Finally, perhaps royalty would in this way avoid the perpetual oscillation of the different factions which do not permit the following out of any plan of foreign policy, nor the accomplishment of any domestic reform. Austria, composed of so many nationalities, presents a great many different interests, all of which must be conciliated, ruled by the one crown; here two statesmen carry the weight of public business, without being crushed by it. Is France poorer than Germany in political ability? The child's play,—quite foolish enough,—called the *institutions constitutionnelles*, developed beyond all bounds, have ended, as is said, by requiring many ministers of state in order to satisfy the increased ambitions of the middle-classes. At first it seemed quite natural to Rabourdin to unite in the same person the secretary of the navy with the secretary of war. According to his ideas the navy was merely one of the accounts kept by the secretary of war, just like the artillery, the cavalry, the infantry, the commissariat. Was it not a mistake to place the admiralty and the marshals in separate departments when they have a common object in view; the defence of the country, the attack of the enemy,

the protection of the national possessions? To the ministry of the interior should be united commerce, the police, and the finances, under penalty of belying its name. To the ministry of foreign affairs should belong law, the king's palace, and everything which in the internal administration concerns arts, literature and science. All protection should be derived directly from the sovereign. This, of course, implied the presidency of the council. Each one of these three administrators would not need more than two hundred clerks under this centralized rule, where Rabourdin would place them all, as was formerly the case, under the monarchy. In taking as an average the sum of twelve thousand francs per head, he calculated that seven millions would be needed for the salaries of these officials, which cost more than twenty in the budget of today. In thus reducing the ministries to three departments he would abolish entire administrations, which had become useless, and whose offices were kept up at immense expense in Paris. He proved that one arrondissement could be ruled by ten men, a prefecture by twelve at the most, which would be at the rate of five thousand government officials for all France—justice and the army not included—a number less than the list even of those employed under the present administration. But in this plan the clerks of the tribunal would have all mortgages under their care; but the public minister would have the making out of deeds, and the management of property. Rabourdin would

reunite under the same head similar parties. Thus mortgages, the transfer of property, the making out of deeds would not have to go from one department to the other, and would only necessitate three supernumeraries for each tribunal, and three for the royal court. The constant application of this principle led Rabourdin to reform the finances. He combined all the various duties under one head, by taxing all kinds of products instead of taxing real estate. According to his ideas these products were the only taxable articles in times of peace. The taxes on real estate, he thought, should be held in reserve in case of war. Then only could the state demand taxes on lands, for it was then occupied in defending them; but in times of peace, it was a grave political error to alarm people beyond a certain limit; in great crises they could then get no more. Thus the *loan* during peace would be placed at par and not at fifty per cent discount, as in bad times; in time of war, real estate should be *taxed*.

The invasion of 1814 and 1815, said Rabourdin to his friends, has established itself in France and demonstrated the workings of an institution that neither law nor Napoléon had power to establish: which is credit.

Unhappily, Xavier thought that the true principles of this admirable government were not well understood, at the time he began his reform in 1820. Rabourdin would tax the products by levying the taxes directly, by suppressing all means of indirect taxation. The collection of taxes was to

be simplified by classing many articles under one head. He would thus beat down the annoying toll-gates at the entrance to the cities, which would bring greater revenues by simplifying their mode of collection,—now very costly. Diminishing the burden of a heavy taxation is not, in a matter of finance, necessarily diminishing the taxes, it is the art of distributing them better; lightening them is to increase the mass of business by giving them more play; the individual pays less, the state receives more. This reform, which might seem immense, rests on a very simple foundation. Rabourdin thought that the taxes on personal effects and furniture were the most faithful representations of the general consumption. Individual fortunes are well represented in France by the rent paid, by the number of servants employed, by the elegant horses and carriages which are the marks of wealth.

Dwellings and what they contain vary little, and would not be likely to disappear. After having indicated the way of making a list of taxable personal property, more correct than the one which at that time existed, he would invest the sums brought into the treasury under the head of *indirect* taxation *at so much per cent* for each assessment. A tax is levying money under more or less specious disguises on things or on people; these disguises serve a good purpose when money is to be extorted, but are they not ridiculous in an age when the class which suffers from the taxes knows why the state makes them out and what machinery it

employs to gather them? In reality the budget is not a strong-box, but a watering-pot; the more it receives and pours out, the more the country prospers. For instance, let us suppose six millions of *cotes aisées*—Rabourdin proved their existence by counting the *cotes riches*—would it not be better to ask them at once for a *tax on wine* which would not be more odious than the tax on *doors and windows* and would produce a hundred million francs, rather than irritate them by taxing the thing itself? By thus regulating the tax, each taxpayer would in reality have to pay less, the state would receive more, and the consumers would enjoy an immense reduction in the price of the articles which the state would no longer allow to be taxed without bonds. Rabourdin would retain the taxes on cultivating vineyards, so that this industry might be protected against overproduction. Then to reach the products of the poorer taxpayers the licenses of retail dealers were to be taxed according to the population of the places in which they lived. Thus under three heads: a tax on wines, a tax on agriculture and a tax on licenses, the treasury would gain great returns without any trouble or vexation, where now a galling tax is divided between the Civil Service and the state. The taxes would then fall on the rich instead of tormenting the poor. Let us take another example. Suppose there was a tax of one franc levied on salt, you would obtain ten or twelve millions of francs, the present tax on salt would disappear, the poor

would breathe freely, agriculture would be helped, the state would receive as much, and no taxpayer would feel the effects of this method. All taxpayers who belong more or less to the industrial classes or to the capitalists would immediately recognize the benefits of a tax thus readjusted, when they see even in the least settled districts the amelioration of the condition of the country and the expansion of commerce. In fact from year to year the state would see an increase in the number of rich taxpayers. By suppressing the levying of indirect taxes—a very costly proceeding, which is a state within a state—the treasury and the taxpayer would gain enormously, by only having to consider the small outlay in the cost of collection. Tobacco and powder could be let to a management under surveillance. The system adopted for these two taxes, further developed by others that Rabourdin invented at the time he remodeled the law in regard to tobacco, was so convincing that this law would not have passed in a Chamber of Deputies which could not be threatened with a rupture of relations, as was then the case with the ministry. It was then less a question of finance than a question of government. The state in itself would then possess nothing, neither forests, mines, nor public-works. That the state should be in the possession of domains was, in Rabourdin's eyes, an administrative error. The state does not know how to make the best of things and therefore deprives itself of taxes, it loses two gains at once.

As to the government manufactures they are under the same nonsensical system as the other industries. The state obtains products at a higher cost than commercial rates, and produces them more slowly. At the same time it fails to perceive its duty in regard to industrial activity, by taking away its support. Does the art of governing a country consist in manufacturing instead of encouraging manufactures, in possessing instead of furthering the greatest variety of possessions? In this system, the state would no longer demand a single security in money. Rabourdin would only admit mortgage securities and this is the reason. Either the state holds the security in specie which hinders the circulation of money, or it invests it at a higher rate of interest than it pays, which is a mean kind of robbery, or it loses on the transaction, which is very foolish; at last, if one day it disposed of the mass of securities, it would in certain cases bring about the most distressing bankruptcy. The land tax would then not disappear entirely. Rabourdin would be in favor of having a small portion of it retained, as a starting point in case of war, but evidently the productions of the soil would become free, and the manufacturer finding raw-materials at the lowest price would be able to compete with foreigners without the deceptive help of duties. The rich would undertake the government of the departments free of charge, in having for their reward a peerage subject to certain conditions. Magistrates, learned bodies, officers of inferior rank would see

their services properly paid. There would be no government official who could complain that he was not treated with great consideration, merited by the value of his work and the importance of his position; each of them would, of his own accord, provide for his future, and France would no longer have at her heart the cancer of pensions. As a result, Rabourdin would find that seven hundred millions only had been spent and would see twelve hundred millions of receipts. A saving of five hundred millions yearly would be more important than the small abatement left after the errors were demonstrated. Then according to his idea the state would take the position of a stockholder, as it was formerly obstinately determined to be a land owner and a manufacturer.

Besides, in order to execute his reform without creating a disturbance, and in order to avoid a Saint-Bartholomew's day throughout the Service, Rabourdin asked for twenty years' time.

Such were the thoughts matured by this man from the time when his place was given to Monsieur de la Billardière, an incapable man. This plan, of so vast an aspect, was in reality very simple, it suppressed so many great state officials, and so many smaller officials equally useless, which required continual calculations, exact statistics, definite proofs. Rabourdin had for a long time studied the budget in its double aspect, that of ways and means, and that of expenses. Thus occupied he passed many nights without his wife's knowledge. It was

nothing more than that he had dared to conceive this plan and to have superimposed it on the administrative body, the next step would be to explain it to a minister of state capable of appreciating it. Rabourdin's success then depended upon the tranquillity of a government still unsettled. He did not consider the government as definitely settled until the time should arrive when three hundred deputies would have the courage to form a compact majority, systematically ministerial. A government formed on this basis had been established since Rabourdin had finished his labors. In this age, the luxury of peace due to the Bourbons caused the people to forget the warlike luxury in the days when France glittered like a vast camp, prodigal and magnificent because victorious. After her campaign in Spain the ministry seemed to enter on one of those peaceful careers where reforms might be accomplished and since three months a new reign had begun without meeting with any obstacles, for Liberalism of the Left had saluted Charles X. with as much enthusiasm as the Right. This was calculated to mislead the most far-seeing people. This moment then seemed propitious for Rabourdin. Was it not a pledge of the durability of an administration to propose and to push to its consummation a reform whose results were to be so great?

This man in consequence was never anything but careworn, he was preoccupied in the morning when he walked down to the office, and when he

returned home at half-past four in the afternoon. Madame Rabourdin, on her part, bemoaned the failure of her life, was weary of her secret struggles to secure some pleasures from her toilet, never seemed more bitterly discontented, but as a wife attached to her husband she regarded as unworthy of a fine woman the shameful practices by which certain women, the wives of government officials, eked out their scanty income. For this reason she had refused all intercourse with Madame Colleville, then in liaison with François Keller, and whose soirées were often more elegant than those on Rue Duphot. She mistook the firm rôle of a political thinker, and the preoccupation of the hard worker, for apathetic depression of the government official subdued by the ennuis of office routine, worsted by the most detestable of all mishaps—by that mediocrity which only earns a living, and she sighed to think that she was married to a man without energy. So about this time she resolved unaided to make her husband's fortune, to thrust him, at all hazards into a higher sphere, and to hide from him the move she was to take. In her mind she still retained the independence of ideas which distinguished her, and which completely elevated her beyond women generally, for she was not like them swayed by petty prejudices, neither did she trouble herself about the shackles imposed by society. In her anger she resolved to fight fools with their own weapons, and to strike out herself if necessary. She saw everything from a high standpoint. A

favorable occcasion presented itself. Monsieur de la Billardière, attacked by a mortal malady, would possibly die in a few days. If Rabourdin should succeed him, his talents, for Célestine thought that he had administrative talents, would be so well appreciated that the place of *maître des requêtes,* promised formerly, would be given him; she imagined him as king's commissioner defending the bills before the Chamber of Deputies. She would then assist him! If need be she would become his secretary. Thus she passed entire nights. That would mean to ride to the Bois de Boulogne in an elegant barouche, to be on an equal footing with Madame Delphine de Nucingen, to have as elegant entertainments as Madame Colleville, to be invited to the great ministerial events, to fascinate her listeners, to have people say of her "Madame Rabourdin *de quelque chose*"—she did not yet know by what territorial title—as they speak of Madame d'Espard, Madame d'Aiglemont, Madame de Carigliano; anything to be free from the odious name of Rabourdin.

These thoughts, which she kept to herself, brought about several changes in her household arrangements. Madame Rabourdin now began to walk with a firm step, and contracted debts. She once more hired a man-servant, whom she dressed in a plain livery of brown cloth with red trimmings. She had some of her furniture restored, she redraped her apartment, embellished it with flowers often renewed, encumbered it with the little nothings

which were fashionable at that time; then she, who used to take some thought as to what she spent, did not now hesitate to dress in harmony with the rank to which she aspired, the profits of which were discounted in several of the shops where she equipped herself for the conflict. So that she might be fashionable on her Wednesdays at home she gave a dinner-party every Friday, those invited on these occasions being expected to call the following Wednesday and take a cup of tea with her. She always chose her guests among influential deputies, among the people who, far and near, would be able to serve her interests. After a while she made a very agreeable circle of acquaintances. People enjoyed themselves greatly at her house, at least they said so, which is sufficient in Paris to attract society. Rabourdin was so busily engaged in finishing his serious and great undertaking that he did not remark this new growth of luxury in his home.

Thus the wife and the husband sought the same promotion, and worked for it on parallel lines, each without the knowledge of the other.

At that time there flourished in the ministry as secretary-general, a certain Monsieur Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx, one of those people whom the fluctuation of politics pushes forward for a few years, they are submerged in tempestuous times, but we find them again on the banks of the stream some distance away, stranded like the hull of a boat, which nevertheless has the semblance of being of some use. The traveler asks himself if

this wreck has not contained precious merchandise, has not been used on important occasions, has not aided in some defence, carried the velvets for some throne or transported some royal corpse. At this time Clément des Lupeaulx—the Lupeaulx eclipsed the Chardin—was in the height of his power. In the most illustrious lives as well as in the most obscure, in animals as well as in secretaries-general, is there not a zenith and a nadir, one period when the color of the hair of animals is beautiful, where fortune showers all her blessings? In the nomenclature created by the writer of fables, des Lupeaulx belonged to the species Bertrand, and was always hunting for Ratons, and as he is to become one of the principal actors in the drama, he merits a description all the more minute, because the Revolution of July has suppressed this office, which was so eminently useful to constitutional ministers.

Moralists usually exercise their energies against the most pressing abuses. For, according to them, crimes should be punished by the court of assizes, or at the police court, but social artifices escape their attention; the qualifications which are of such service under the rule of the Code are either above or beneath their comprehension, they possess neither magnifying-glasses nor telescopes; sins must be very great to be seen by them. Always thinking of the beasts, they do not discover the reptiles; happily they leave to the comic poets the shading which colors Chardin des Lupeaulx. Egotistical and vain, supple and proud, libertine and

gourmand, grasping from the pressure of his debts, silent as the tomb, from which nothing issues to contradict the epitaph destined to be read by the passers-by, intrepid and fearless when soliciting, amiable and witty in every acceptation of the word, a timely raillery possessing great tact, knowing how to compromise you by a caress as well as by a nudge, recoiling before no width of stream, and gracefully jumping over it, an intrepid admirer of Voltaire, yet attending mass at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, when fashionable people were to be seen there, this secretary-general resembled all the men of mediocre ability who form the kernel of the political world. Understanding human nature, he assumed the position of listener, and then no one could be more attentive. Thus in order to awaken no suspicion he flattered even to satiety, insinuating as a perfume, and caressing as a woman. He was just forty years of age. His youth had for some time hindered his advancement, for he felt that his wheel of fortune would turn on his becoming a deputy. How had he attained this position? every one asked. The answer was very simple: des Lupeaulx, although a fool in regard to politics, had taken charge of delicate undertakings which could not have been confided to a self-respecting man, nor to one who had no self-respect, but which might be confided to a man at the same time serious and enigmatical, who could be acknowledged or disavowed at will. His position was that of being always compromised, but he gained as much by

failure as he did by success. He well understood that under the Restoration, a period of continual transactions between men and things, between deeds accomplished and those which only loomed above the horizon, it was very necessary for the ruling powers to have a factotum. When once there is an old woman-servant in the family who knows how to make and air the bed, where to sweep the dust, and where is thrown the soiled linen, where the silver is kept, who can appease a creditor, who can tell which people should be allowed to enter the house and which refused admittance; this creature, even if she have vices, is dirty, bandy-legged or toothless, or tries the lottery and steals thirty sous a day for her chance, is liked and consulted by her masters from habit, gives her advice in the most important matters: she is there, suggests ways and means, and ferrets out secrets, brings the rouge and the shawl at the right moment, lets herself be scolded, or pushed down the stairs, and the next day early, with a smiling face, brings an excellent consommé. However great a statesman may be, he requires a housekeeper, before whom he can be weak, undecided—caviling with his lot in life—questioning himself, answering himself and preparing for the combat. Is this person not like the soft wood of savages, which strikes fire when rubbed against hard wood? Many a genius is thus lighted. Napoléon lived with Berthier, and Richelieu with Père Joseph. Des Lupeaulx dwelt with everyone. He continued

friends with fallen ministers in constituting himself their go-between with their successors, wafting thus the last flattery and perfuming the first compliment. He also understood very well the little matters which a statesman has not the leisure to think of. He saw what was necessary; he knew how to obey; he relieved his base acts by jesting about them at first, so as to fully profit by them, and he chose that the service he rendered should be one that could not easily be forgotten. Thus when the ditch between the Empire and the Restoration was to be crossed, when everyone was looking about for a plank to cross it, at the moment when the curs of the Empire were rushing by with enthusiastic speeches, des Lupeaulx crossed the frontier after having borrowed large amounts from the usurers. Risking everything in hopes of gaining everything, he bought up the most pressing debts of Louis XVIII., and by this means was the first to liquidate nearly three millions of them at twenty per cent, for he had the good luck to be fortunately placed in 1814 and 1815. The profits were absorbed by Sieurs Gobseck, Werbrust and Gigonnet, silent partners in the enterprise; but des Lupeaulx had promised them these profits, he was not playing one move only, he played the entire bank, by knowing well that Louis XVIII. was not a man to forget this debt of honor. Des Lupeaulx was nominated *maître des requêtes*, Knight of the Order of Saint-Louis, and Officer of the Legion of Honor. When this clever man had once climbed to this

height, he looked around him for the means of holding himself on this ladder; for in such a stronghold as he had succeeded in entering, generals do not long indulge in useless remarks. Thus to his capacity of drudge and agent he added that of giving gratuitous consultations on the secret maladies of the Civil Service. After having discovered in the so-called superior men of the Restoration, their great inferiority in regard to the events which led them to the front, he overcame their political mediocrity by bringing them, by selling them—in the very midst of the crisis—the word of command which men of talent hear in future events. Do not think that this word originated in his own mind; if it had, des Lupeaulx would have been a man of genius, while he was only a man of talent. This Bertrand went everywhere, collecting opinions, sounding men's minds, and catching their tenor. He gathered knowledge like a true and indefatigable political bee. This walking dictionary of Bayle did not do as did that famous lexicon, he did not report all opinions without drawing his own conclusions, he had the talent of the fly which alights directly on the choicest meat in the centre of the kitchen. He also passed for a man who was indispensable to statesmen. This belief had become so deeply rooted in all minds, that the ambitious new-comers thought it necessary to compromise des Lupeaulx in order to prevent him from rising higher; they recompensed him for his lack of public position by their secret confidence. Nevertheless,

feeling that everyone depended upon him, this searcher for ideas exacted dues. Rewarded by a staff appointment in the National Guard, where he held a sinecure which was paid for by the city of Paris, he was government commissioner to a joint stock company, and filled the position of inspector in the king's household. His two official positions inscribed on the budget were those of secretary-general and *maître des requêtes*. Now he wished to be Commander of the Legion of Honor, Gentleman of the Bed-Chamber, Count and Deputy; to become a Deputy it was necessary for him to pay a thousand francs of taxes, and the miserable homestead of des Lupeaulx scarcely produced five hundred francs of rent. Where could he obtain money to build a château, and to surround it with several respectable looking domains, so that he might throw dust in the eyes of an entire arrondissement? Notwithstanding that he dined out every day, that he had been housed for nine years at the expense of the state, that he had used the carriage belonging to the minister of state, des Lupeaulx possessed but little, at the moment when this scene opens, except thirty thousand francs of genuine debts, which no one disputed. A marriage might set this ambitious man afloat, by bailing out his bark, now full of the water of debt; but a good marriage would depend upon his advancement, and his advancement on his becoming a Deputy. In searching for the means of breaking through this vicious circle, he saw but one way, that of rendering a

great service, or of carrying an intrigue to a successful issue. But alas! the days of conspiracies were past, and the Bourbons had apparently vanquished all parties. Unfortunately, for the last few years, the government had been so well held up to the light of day by the foolish discussions of the Left, whose aim was to render all government in France impossible, that business could no longer be carried on; the last was done in Spain, and what an outcry it excited! Then des Lupeaulx multiplied difficulties in believing in the friendship of his minister, to whom he imprudently expressed the desire of being placed on the ministerial bench. The ministers divined the source of this wish, which was that des Lupeaulx thought to consolidate his now precarious position, and no longer remain under their rule. The greyhound turned against the huntsman. The ministers gave him by turns cuts with the whip and caresses, and placed rivals in his path; but toward them des Lupeaulx conducted himself as a practised courtier would with a new-comer. He laid traps for them into which they fell, and thereby exercised prompt justice. The more he felt himself threatened, the more he desired to gain a permanent position; but he was forced to play prudently! Otherwise, in one moment all might be lost. One stroke of the pen might strike off his epaulettes which told his rank as civil-colonel, his inspectorship, his sinecure in the joint stock company, his two offices and the advantages pertaining to them; in all, six salaries

retained under fire of the law regarding the holding of several offices. Often he threatened his minister as a mistress threatens her lover, he said he was on the point of marrying a rich widow; then the minister would coax his dear des Lupeaulx. When one of these reconciliations took place, he received the formal promise of a place in the Academy of Belles-Lettres at the first vacancy. It was he said, worth the keep of a horse. In his fine position, Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx was like a tree planted in fertile soil. He could satisfy his vices, his caprices, his virtues and his defects.

These are the trials of his life: daily he had to choose from among five or six invitations, the house where he would be likely to find the best dinner. Every morning he went to the informal reception of the minister to make him and his wife laugh, to pet the children and to play with them. Then he worked for an hour or two, that is to say he lay back in a comfortable chair, and read the papers, dictated the purport of a letter, received visitors during the minister's absence, explained the work in a general way, held, or sprinkled a few drops of the blessed water of the court, glanced over the petitions through his eye-glasses, or wrote in his own handwriting on the margin, words which signified: *I consider it ridiculous, but do what you think best about it!* Everyone knew that when des Lupeaulx was interested in any one or anything, he attended to the matter himself. He permitted the head clerks to converse confidentially about their

private affairs, at the same time he listened to their gossip. From time to time he went to the château to get his cue. He always waited for the minister to return from the chamber when it was in session, to see if he was required to originate or direct any intrigue. This official sybarite was well dressed, dined, and visited twelve or fifteen drawing-rooms between eight in the evening and three in the morning. At the opera, he talked with journalists, for by them he was held in great esteem; a continual flow of small courtesies was exchanged between them, he dished up for them his misleading news, and greedily devoured theirs; he prevented them from attacking this or that minister on such or such of their actions, as he said, it would cause their wives or their mistresses real distress.

Say that the bill is worth nothing, and prove it if you can; but do not say that Mariette danced badly. Let us speak slightingly of our love for our female relatives, but let us not reveal the follies of our youth. The devil! we have all sowed our wild oats, and we do not know what will become of us in the present state of affairs. Perhaps you will be minister of state, you who to-day are seasoning the sandwiches of the *Constitutionnel*—

In return, as occasion offered, he helped editors, he overcame obstacles which interfered with the production of a play, he gave gratuities or a good dinner at the appropriate moment, or promised to facilitate the settling up of some affair. Moreover he loved literature and patronized the arts; he

possessed autographs and magnificent albums which he obtained gratis, besides which he owned many sketches and pictures. He did a great many favors for artists by not injuring them, and in gratifying them on certain occasions when their self-love longed for something which was not very costly. He was also loved by the world of actors and actresses, of journalists and artists. In the first place they all had the same vices and the same indolence as himself; then they were so witty between their cups or in company with two dancing girls! by these means how could they help being friends? If des Lupeaulx had not been secretary-general, he would have been a journalist. Thus in the fifteen years' struggle in which the hammer of epigram opened the breach by which insurrection entered, des Lupeaulx never received the least blow.

In seeing this man playing ball in the minister's garden with the minister's children, the petty clerks racked their brains to guess the secret of his influence and the nature of his work, while the aristocrats of every ministry regarded him as the most dangerous Mephistopheles, adored him and returned to him with interest, the flatteries he bestowed in the higher ranks. The utility of the secretary-general, although as difficult for the under-clerks to decipher as a hieroglyphic inscription, was as plain as the rule of three to those interested. Charged with choosing opinions and ideas, with making verbal reports, this little prince of Wagram, of the ministerial Napoléon, knew all the secrets of

parliamentary politics; dragged in the lukewarm, fetched, carried, and interred propositions, said the ayes or nays that the minister himself dared not say. Compelled to receive the first fire and the first blows of despair or of anger, he condoled or laughed with the minister. Mysterious link by which many interests were attached to the château, and discreet as a confessor, he sometimes knew everything, and then again he knew nothing; besides he was able to say of a minister what a minister would hesitate to say of himself. In short, with this political Hephæstion, the minister might dare to be himself; might lay aside his wig and his false teeth, might thrust aside formalities and wear his slippers, expose his sharp practices, and lay bare his conscience. Everything then was not a bed of roses for des Lupeaulx; he flattered and advised his minister, he was obliged to flatter him if he wished to advise him, to counsel him in flattering him and to disguise flattery under the guise of advice. For this reason nearly all political men who adopt this method have very bilious complexions. The habit they have of constantly shaking their heads affirmatively in approval of what has been said, or in order to give the appearance of doing so, gave a certain peculiar turn to their heads. They agreed indifferently to everything said in their hearing. Their conversation was full of *buts, howevers, notwithstandings, as for me, in your place, I would do*—they often said *in your place*—phrases, however, which invite contradiction.

In person Clément des Lupeaulx gave the impression of having been a handsome man; he was five feet, four inches tall, modestly stout, his complexion flushed with good cheer, he had a worn appearance, a powdered head, delicate little spectacles; to sum up, he was blond—which could be seen by glancing at his hand, which was as plump as that of an old woman—rather too square, short nails—the hand of a satrap. His foot was sufficiently remarkable. After five o'clock in the afternoon des Lupeaulx always wore open-work silk stockings, low shoes, black trousers, and a cashmere vest, he carried an unscented cambric handkerchief and wore a gold chain; he also wore a coat of a shade known as "King's blue," with carved buttons, and the insignia of his orders. In the morning he wore creaking boots under gray trousers, and the short, tight little overcoat affected by politicians. In his appearance he more closely resembled a cunning lawyer than a minister of state. His eyes being glazed by the constant use of spectacles, made him appear uglier than he really was, that is when he by mischance removed his glasses. To skilful judges, to upright men who are only at their ease with truthful men, des Lupeaulx was insupportable. For his gracious manners hid his lies, his agreeable protestations, his old-time compliments—always new to the foolish—showed but too plainly what he was. Every observing man saw in him a rotten plank on which one should be very careful not to step. No sooner had the beautiful Madame Rabourdin deigned to

interest herself in the administrative advancement of her husband, than she became acquainted with Clément des Lupeaulx, and studied his character, thinking perchance she might find in this scantling some ligneous fibres solid enough for her to step across from the bureau to the department, from a salary of eight thousand to twelve thousand francs. This brilliant woman thought herself competent to play with this political roué. Monsieur des Lupeaulx then was partly the cause of the extraordinary expenses which were now made and were continued in the Rabourdin household.

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Rue Duphot, built under the Empire, is remarkable for the elegant exterior of some of the houses, containing as a general rule apartments which were very well-planned. The one occupied by Madame Rabourdin was especially well-arranged, an advantage which counts for a great deal in the elegance of a home. A beautiful ante-chamber, of considerable size, lighted from the court, led to a large salon, the windows of which looked out on the street. At the right of this salon were Rabourdin's study and bed-room, and behind them the dining-room, which was entered through the ante-chamber; to the left was Madame Rabourdin's bed-room and her dressing-room, behind which was the little bed-room of her daughter. On reception days the door of Rabourdin's study and also the door of Madame Rabourdin's bed-room were thrown open. The rooms were thus large enough to entertain a select company, without exciting the ridicule which weighs so heavily on certain middle-class receptions, where the extra preparations, made at the expense of daily comfort, show the infrequency of the occasion. The drawing-room had just been redraped in yellow silk with light-brown colored trimmings. Madame Rabourdin's bed-room was upholstered in chintz of a bright blue color, and was furnished in the *rococo* style. Rabourdin's study had fallen heir to the hangings

from the old drawing-room, which had been rejuvenated, it was also adorned by the beautiful pictures which had been left by Leprince. The daughter of the late appraiser utilized in her dining-room the exquisite Turkish rugs, which her father had bought at a bargain, by placing them as panels framed in old ebony, which has since become very costly. Elegant buffets designed by Boulle, also bought by the late appraiser, ornamented the wall of this room, in the centre of which sparkled the brass arabesques inlaid with tortoise-shell, which decorated the first pedestal clock which had been made after the patterns of the XVII. Century, and set the then present fashion. Flowers perfumed this apartment, furnished so tastefully, and containing so many beautiful things, where each detail was a work of art well placed and well surrounded; where Madame Rabourdin—dressed with that peculiar simplicity which artists affect—appeared like a woman accustomed to these possessions; she never spoke of them, but allowed the charms of her mind to complete the effect produced upon her guests by this ensemble. Thanks to her father, since *rococo* style had become the fashion, everyone spoke of Célestine.

Accustomed as des Lupeaulx was to false as well as to real magnificence of all kinds, he was surprised when he went to Madame Rabourdin's house. The fascination which seized this Parisian Asmodeus may be explained by a comparison. Let us imagine a traveler fatigued with the rich aspects of Italy,

Brazil or the Indies, on returning to his country finding on his way a delightful little lake, for instance, like Lake d'Orta, at the foot of Monte Rosa, an island beautifully placed on its calm waters, bewitching and at the same time simple, wild but nevertheless beautiful, standing alone, but well surrounded; elegant groves, and statues effectively placed. Beyond, shores both wild and cultivated; grandeur and confusion without, while within, everything is of usual size. The world which the traveler has seen is represented there in miniature modest and pure; his soul refreshed, invites him to rest there, for a poetic and melodious charm surrounds him with harmonious thoughts, and awakens all his ideas. This represents at the same time a monastery and the world! A few days earlier the beautiful Madame Firmiani, one of the most fascinating women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, who liked and visited Madame Rabourdin, said to des Lupeaulx—whom she had especially invited to hear this remark: "Why do you not go to see Madame—?" looking toward Célestine. She has delightful evenings, and what is more, she gives dinners—better than mine." Des Lupeaulx allowed himself to be persuaded into promising to call by the beautiful Madame Rabourdin, who for the first time raised her eyes to his while speaking. And he went to Rue Duphot, does not that tell everything? Figaro says woman has only one ruse, but that is infallible. When des Lupeaulx first dined at the house of this unimportant head-clerk, he

promised himself that he would dine there occasionally. Thanks to the perfectly proper and conventional manœuvres of this charming woman, whom her rival, Madame Colleville, called *the Célimène of Rue Duphot*, he had dined there every Friday for the past month, and had returned of his own free will to drink a cup of tea every Wednesday. For some days past, Madame Rabourdin, thanks to her wise and fine powers of perception, thought she had found in this ministerial plank a spot where she might place her foot. She no longer doubted her success. Her inward joy can only be understood in the homes of government officials who for three or four years have looked forward to prosperity as the result of attaining the longed-for and cherished appointment. How many troubles are appeased! how many good wishes given to the ministerial divinities! How many visits are made for self-interest! At last, thanks to her boldness, Madame Rabourdin heard the hour strike, when she was to have twenty thousand francs a year instead of eight thousand.

And I shall have managed well, she said to herself. I have been under some expense; but in this age no one seeks merit that hides itself, whereas if one keeps one's self well in sight, before the world, and cultivates opportunities, and extends them, he becomes a man of consequence. After all, ministers of state and their friends are only interested in the people whom they see, and Rabourdin takes everything on trust! If I had not cajoled these

three deputies, perhaps they would have wanted de la Billardière's place themselves; whereas now, entertained at my house, they would be ashamed to ask this—so they become our supporters instead of our rivals. I have in a measure played the coquette, but I am happy to know that the first nonsense with which men are amused has been sufficient.

The day on which a serious and unforeseen struggle took place about this appointment after a ministerial dinner which preceded one of these receptions which ministers regard as public, des Lupeaulx was by the fire-place near the wife of the minister. While taking his cup of coffee he again included Madame Rabourdin among the seven or eight really superior women of Paris. Many times he had staked Madame Rabourdin like Corporal Trim staked his cap.

"Do not say that too often, dear friend, or you will injure her," said the wife of the minister to him, half laughingly.

No woman likes to hear another woman praised in her presence; she reserves her opinion in that case, so as to embitter the praise.

"Poor La Billardière is dying," remarked His Excellency, "the administrative succession falls to Rabourdin, one of our most able men, to whom our predecessors have not behaved well, although one of them owed his position as Prefect of Police under the Empire to a certain salaried personage who was interested in Rabourdin. Frankly, dear

friend, you are yet young enough to be loved for yourself—"

"If La Billardiére's place is given to Rabourdin, I may be believed when I praise the superiority of his wife," replied des Lupeaulx, piqued by the minister's sarcasm, "but if the countess would judge for herself—"

"Shall I invite her to my next ball, yes? Your superior woman will arrive when the women are present who come here to ridicule us, and when they hear the name *Madame Rabourdin* announced—"

"But is not Madame Firmiani received at the house of the Minister of Foreign Affairs?"

"She was born a Cadignan!"—said the new count quickly in turning a fierce glance toward his secretary-general, for neither he nor his wife were noble.

Many people thought that important affairs were being discussed, and the office-seekers stayed at the other end of the room. When des Lupeaulx left, the new countess said to her husband:

"I believe des Lupeaulx is in love!"

"Then it is the first time in his life," he replied, shrugging his shoulders, as much as to say to his wife that des Lupeaulx did not occupy himself with trifles.

The minister then saw a Deputy of the Right Centre enter and he left his wife to try to influence an undecided vote. But this Deputy, under the blow of an unforeseen and overwhelming disaster,

wished to gain protection and he had just announced the secret that in a few days he would be obliged to tender his resignation. Thus forewarned, the minister would be able to use his batteries before those of the opposition.

The minister, that is to say des Lupeaulx, had invited to dine with him a person who had remained irremovably placed under all the ministries, a person who suffered very much from embarrassment, and who in his desire to gain a dignified expression of countenance, stood motionless on his two legs, placed close together like those of an Egyptian mummy. This functionary waited near the fireplace at the moment when he was thanking the secretary-general, whose abrupt and unlooked for retreat disconcerted him just as he was about to pay a compliment. This man was purely and simply the cashier at the ministry, he was the only clerk who did not tremble when the government changed hands. At this time the Chamber of Deputies did not meddle meanly with the budget, as it does in the degenerate days in which we live; it did not contemptibly reduce the ministerial emoluments, or save—as the saying is, in kitchen parlance—the candle ends in order to economize, it accorded to each minister taking charge of a department, an indemnity called an *outfit*. It costs, alas! as much to enter the Service as to retire from it, and the newcomer is confronted by expenses of all kinds which it is scarcely possible to foresee. This indemnity consists of the snug little sum of twenty-five

thousand francs. When the decisions appeared in the *Moniteur,* the greater and less officials clustered around the stoves or before the fire-places, being shaken by the political storm, said to each other: "What will this one do? will he increase the number of clerks? will he dismiss two in order to put in three to fill their places?" The calm cashier took twenty-five beautiful bank-notes, pinned them together, while on his beadle's solemn face there rested a joyous expression. He climbed up the stairs of the apartments and had himself presented to the minister, at his reception, by people who confounded, as one and the same power, the money and the guardian of that money, the contents and the man who took charge of it, the idea and the form. The cashier seized the ministerial couple at the dawn of official ecstasy, during which period a statesman is benign and good-natured. To the *What do you want?* by which the minister addressed him, he replied by showing the bank-notes, at the same time saying that he had hastened to bring His Excellency the usual indemnity. He explained the motives to the minister's wife, who was astonished as well as delighted, and who never failed to take some of it, and often all. An outfit is a household affair. The cashier then turned a compliment, and spoke a few elegant phrases to monseigneur: "If His Excellency would deign to retain him, if, satisfied with his services, which were purely mechanical, if, etc." As a man who brings twenty-five thousand francs is always a worthy clerk, the

cashier did not leave without hearing that his position was assured, this position whence he had seen many ministers come, go and die during twenty-five years. Then he placed himself at the service of the minister's wife, he brought the monthly thirteen thousand francs at a useful time, he advanced them or held them back as ordered, and, according to an old monastic saying, he in this way managed to get a voice in the chapter.

Formerly bookkeeper at the Treasury, when the Treasury kept its books by double-entry, Sieur Saillard was indemnified for the loss of that position, by his present position as cashier. He was a large, stout, good kind of man, very strong in the matter of bookkeeping, very weak in everything else, round as a cipher, simple as possible, and he walked to the office with measured steps like those of an elephant, and returned in the same manner to the Place Royale, where he lived on the ground floor of an old house which he owned. As companion in his walks to and fro he had Monsieur Isidore Baudoyer, head of a bureau in the department of Monsieur de la Billardière, one of Rabourdin's colleagues, who had married Elisabeth Saillard, Monsieur Saillard's only daughter, and who had therefore naturally taken an apartment above his. No one at the ministry doubted that Saillard was a fool, but no one could tell how far his stupidity would go; it was too compact to be examined, it did not ring hollow; it absorbed everything and gave nothing. Bixiou—a clerk of whom I will

speak later on—made a caricature of the cashier by drawing a head dressed with a wig, at the top of an egg, and two little limbs beneath, with this inscription: "Born to pay and to receive without ever blundering. A little less luck, and he might have been messenger to the Bank of France; a little more ambition and he might have been discharged."

At this time, the minister regarded his cashier as we regard a curtain or a cornice, without thinking that the ornament can hear our conversations, or understand our inward thoughts.

"I would advise, as nearly as possible, that we should settle everything with the prefect in the most secret manner, because des Lupeaulx wishes the place for himself," said the minister to the deposed Deputy, "his small estate is in your arrondissement, and we do not want him to have the position."

"He has not the qualifications, nor is he old enough," said the Deputy.

"Yes, but you know how the question of age was decided for Casimer Périer. As to worldly goods, des Lupeaulx possesses something, though not much; but the law has not foreseen its possibly great increase in value—commissions have wide margins for the Deputies of the Centre, and we cannot ostensibly oppose the good-will that is shown to this dear friend."

"But where could he get the money for these acquisitions?"

"And how did Manuel come to possess a house in Paris?" said the minister.

The cashier listened, but very reluctantly. These rapid remarks, although they were spoken softly, struck Saillard's ear by one of those acoustic rebounds which are not yet well understood. Do you know what feeling took possession of this good man when he heard these political secrets? Extreme terror. He was one of those simple-minded persons who hate to appear to be listening to what they should not hear, to enter where they are not invited, to appear bold when they are timid, inquisitive when they are discreet. The cashier glided along the carpet so as to withdraw, and when the minister perceived his presence he was some distance away. Saillard was a ministerial fanatic incapable of the least indiscretion; if the minister had had any idea that he had overheard the secret, he would only have had to say to him *Motus!* The cashier profited by the influx of office-seekers, called a cab, hired by the hour for those costly entertainments, and returned to his house in the Place Royale.

While the father Saillard was driving through Paris, his son-in-law and his dear Elisabeth were playing a virtuous game of boston with the Abbé Gaudron, their confessor, in company with a few of their neighbors, and a certain Martin Falleix, a brass-founder in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, to whom Saillard had loaned the funds necessary to establish the business on a favorable footing. This Falleix, a respectable Auvergnat, had come with

his brazier on his back and had been immediately employed by the firm of Brézac, which was chiefly engaged in dismantling châteaux. Martin Falleix was about twenty-seven years of age, and as much spoiled by success as anyone else; he had the good fortune to possess an interest in the business through Monsieur Saillard, for having worked out a discovery in smelting—patent of invention and gold medal of the Exposition of 1825. Madame Baudoyer, whose only daughter was treading—to use an expression of old Saillard—at the tail end of her twelve years, had fixed her choice on Falleix, a thick-set, swarthy, active fellow of strict integrity, whose education she was directing. According to her ideas this education consisted in teaching this brave Auvergnat to play boston, to hold his cards properly, and to let no one see his hand, to be well-shaved before coming to the house, to clean his hands by using ordinary bar soap; not to swear, to speak their French, to wear boots instead of shoes, to wear calico shirts instead of sacking, to brush his hair up instead of smoothing it down. The week before, Elisabeth had persuaded Falleix to take off his earrings—two enormous flat rings resembling hoops.

"You go too far, Madame Baudoyer," he said, in seeing her delight at this sacrifice, "you rule me too strictly; you make me clean my teeth, and that loosens them; you will soon order me to brush my nails, and curl my hair, which will not be appropriate in our business; we do not like dandies."

Elisabeth Baudoyer, *née Saillard*, was one of

those persons who cannot be described by reason of their very commonness; yet who, nevertheless, ought to be sketched; because they are a good type of the little Parisian bourgeoisie who occupy a place above the rich artisan and beneath the upper untitled class—whose virtues are almost vices, whose defects are never agreeable, but whose manners, although stupid, do not lack originality. Elisabeth had a somewhat pinched appearance, very painful to behold. Her form—scarcely over four feet high—was so thin that her waist scarcely measured twenty inches. Her fine features were grouped about her nose, and gave her face a vague resemblance to a weasel's snout. After she was over thirty years of age she had the appearance of a girl of sixteen or seventeen. Her china-blue eyes, overhung by heavy eyelids, as well as by the arch of her eyebrows, shed but little light. Everything about her was seedy. Her light hair was nearly white, and her flat forehead was brightened by planes which absorbed the light, while her complexion was full of gray, almost leaden, tints. The lower part of her face—more triangular than oval—terminated in an irregular manner the generally unshapely outline. Besides, her voice had a rather pretty intonation ranging from sharpness to sweetness. Elisabeth was a good sample of the little bourgeoise who counsels her husband in the evening, on his pillow, without taking the least credit for her virtues. She was ambitious, but not designing, and developed selfishness only in domestic

affairs. Had she lived in the country, she would have increased her property, but now she wished to advance in the administration. To narrate the life of her father and her mother is to give a good idea of the woman by painting her childhood and girlhood.

Monsieur Saillard married the daughter of a man who dealt in furniture, whose store was under the arcade of the market-place. Monsieur and Madame Saillard, owing to their limited means, were at first obliged to endure constant privations. After having been married for thirty-three years and having worked in the Civil Service for twenty-nine years, the property of the Saillards—that is the name by which their circle of acquaintances called them—consisted of sixty thousand francs entrusted to Falleix, the house in the Place Royale bought for forty thousand francs in 1804, and thirty-six thousand francs of dowry which they had given to their daughter. But of this capital, the sum of about fifty thousand francs had come to them through the will of the widow Bidault, Madame Saillard's mother. Saillard's salary had always brought him four thousand five hundred francs, for his position was one which led to no promotion, and which for a long time had tempted no one. These ninety thousand francs, amassed cent by cent, were the result of petty economies, unintelligently used. In fact the Saillards knew no other manner of placing their money than to take it in sums of five thousand francs to their notary, Monsieur Sorbier, Cardot's

predecessor, and to lend it at five per cent on first mortgage, with the wife's rights reserved, if the borrower were married! In 1804 Madame Saillard obtained an office for the sale of stamped-paper, which circumstance made it necessary to have a servant in the house. At this time the house, which was worth more than a hundred thousand francs, rented for eight thousand. Falleix contributed seven per cent of his sixty thousand francs, besides an equal division of the profits. Thus the Saillards enjoyed at least seventeen thousand francs income. The whole ambition of the good man was to obtain the Cross of the Legion of Honor on retiring from office.

Elisabeth spent her youth in constant toil in a family whose manners were serious and whose ideas were limited. This family would consider well before buying a hat for Saillard, the number of years a coat had lasted were calculated, the umbrellas were hung up on a peg by means of a brass ring. The house had not had any repairs since 1804. The Saillards kept the ground floor in the same condition in which the previous owner had left it; the gilding had peeled off of the frames of the pier-glasses, the frescoes over the doors were scarcely visible, owing to the dust which had lodged there all those years. In these large and beautiful rooms the sculptured marble mantel-pieces were still to be seen, also the ceilings worthy of Versailles, and the old furniture from the house of the widow Bidault. These consisted of walnut arm-chairs, disjointed

and covered with tapestry rose-wood bureaus, with hall centre-tables decorated with brass ornaments, and having white marble tops which were cracked; one superb Boulle secretary, the value of which fashion had not yet recognized; beside a chaos of bargains which had been purchased by the widow of the merchant, whose store was in the arcade of the market-place: pictures bought for the beauty of their frames; crockery of composite designs, that is to say, a dessert service of magnificent Japanese plates, while the rest of the set was of various makes; silver-plate which did not match, old glass, fine damask, and a four-post canopied bedstead hung with chintz, and a feather bed.

Amid all these relics Madame Saillard always sat in a modern mahogany easy-chair. Her feet placed on a foot-warmer were well toasted. She drew her chair near a fire-place full of ashes, but without fire, while on top of the mantel-piece were an ornamented panel, antique bronzes, and candelabra ornamented with flowers, but containing no candles, for she lighted the room by means of a candle which, owing to the drippings, had the appearance of being fluted and which stood in a flat brass candlestick. Madame Saillard's countenance was one which, notwithstanding the wrinkles, showed the marks of obstinacy and severity, limited ideas, an all-around probity, a religion without compassion, artless avarice and the peace of a good conscience. In certain Flemish pictures, one may see the wives of the burgomasters formed by nature after the same

pattern, and wonderfully well reproduced in the painting; but they are clad in beautiful velvet robes or precious stuffs, while Madame Saillard had no costumes, except that antique garment called in Touraine and Picardy *cottes*, or more generally in France, petticoats, a kind of skirts pleated behind and at the sides, worn one over the other. Her body was enclosed in a jacket, another fashion of a bygone age! She continued to wear the butterfly bonnet, and shoes with high heels. Although she was fifty-seven years old, and from having worked so faithfully in household duties she might now feel herself entitled to some rest, she knitted her husband's stockings, her own and her uncle's, as the country women knit while walking, speaking, taking the air in the garden or in looking around the kitchen to see what is going on there.

The Saillards' avarice, at first the result of necessity, had become habitual. The cashier, on returning from the office, took off his coat, and worked with his own hands in the beautiful garden shut off from the court by a railing, and which was devoted to their exclusive use. For some time Elisabeth accompanied her mother to market every morning, and these two attended to all the domestic department. Her mother knew how to cook a duck dressed with turnips in the most delicious manner, but according to Saillard, Elisabeth knew how to hash what was left over of a leg of mutton with onions, so as to distance all rivals. "One might eat one's uncle in that dish without being any the

wiser," he used to remark. As soon as Elisabeth knew how to use her needle, her mother assigned to her the mending of the house linen and her father's clothes. As she was incessantly occupied in menial work, she never went out alone. Although she lived but a few steps from the Boulevard du Temple, where Franconi, la Gaieté, l'Ambigu-Comique were, while further on was the Porte-Saint-Martin, Elisabeth had never gone to the *play*. When she thought she would like to *see what was going on there*—with the permission of Monsieur Gaudron, of course—Monsieur Baudoyer took her, at great expense, and showed her the most beautiful of all sights, the Opera, where they were then playing *The Chinese Plowman*. Elisabeth thought the play as tantalizing as flies, and had no desire to go there again. On Sundays, after having walked four times from the Place Royale to Saint-Paul's church and back—for the mother made her conform strictly to the precepts and duties belonging to religion—her father and mother took her to the Turkish Café, where they seated themselves on chairs placed between a barrier and the wall. The Saillards hurried to be there among the first, so that they could get the best seats, and could also amuse themselves watching the people as they passed. At this time the Turkish Café was the rendezvous of the fashionable society of the Marais, the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and of the people living in the neighborhood of those places. In summer Elisabeth had never worn anything but cotton gowns, and in winter

merino; these she made herself. Her mother only gave her twenty francs a month for her expenses, but her father, who loved her dearly, tempered this strictness by giving her a few presents. She never read books which the Abbé Gaudron—vicar of Saint-Paul, and family adviser—called profane. This régime had borne its fruits. Elisabeth found it necessary to give way to her feelings in some direction, and so she became greedy for gain, although she lacked neither sense nor perspicacity; but her religious theories and her ignorance had combined to limit the workings of her mind, as though bound with an iron band. She only thought about the most common-place events, and such thoughts as she had were soon exhausted on a few points of the question. She threw her whole soul into the matter she had on hand. Repressed by her religious observances, the natural scope of her intelligence could only be employed within the limit set by her conscience, which formed a mind stored with subtleties in which self-interest chooses subterfuges. Like those saintly personages in whom religion has not stifled ambition, she was capable of asking her neighbors to commit blamable deeds from which she might reap all the fruit; on such an occasion she would have been, like them, implacable as to her dues, and dissembling in the means of obtaining them. If offended, she would have watched her adversaries with the perfidious patience of a cat, and was capable of successfully planning some cold and complete vengeance, which

she laid to the account of God. Until Elisabeth's marriage, the Saillards had no other society than that of the Abbé Gaudron, a priest born in Auvergne, who was made vicar of Saint-Paul, after the restoration of the Catholic worship. Besides this ecclesiastic, who was a friend of the late Madame Bidault, there was Madame Saillard's uncle on her father's side, an old paper-dealer, who had retired from business the second year of the Republic; at this time he was sixty-nine years of age, and he only came to see them on a Sunday, because there was no business done on that day.

This little old man had a face of a greenish hue—the most remarkable feature of which was a nose as red as that of a drinker—pierced with two vulture-like eyes; his gray hair was allowed to float under a three-cornered hat; he wore breeches with flaps that extended considerably beyond the buckles, cotton stockings of mixed colors, knitted by his niece, whom he always called *the little Saillard;* large shoes with silver buckles, and an overcoat of many colors. He looked very much like those little sextons—vergers—bell-ringers—beadles—grave-diggers—parish-clerks of the village, who are taken for the fancies of caricaturists until they are seen performing their various duties. He had just now come on foot to dine, and intended to return in the same way to Rue Grenétal, where he lived on the third floor. His business was that of discounting commercial paper in the Quartier Saint-Martin, where he was known by the nickname

of Gigonnet, in consequence of the nervous and convulsive way in which he raised his leg. Monsieur Bidault had been discounting since the year II. in partnership with a Dutchman, Sieur Werbrust, a friend of Gobseck.

Later, in the bank of the Saint-Paul factory, Saillard made the acquaintance of Monsieur and Madame Transon, extensive dealers in pottery, established in Rue de Lesdiguières, who took a great interest in Elisabeth, and who introduced young Isidore Baudoyer to the Saillards, hoping that it would result in Elisabeth's marriage. The connection of Monsieur and Madame Baudoyer with the Saillards was strengthened by the approval of Gigonnet, who for some time had employed a Sieur Mitral in his business, a sheriff's officer, a brother of Madame Baudoyer, the mother, who was then about to retire to dwell in a beautiful house at Ile-Adam. Monsieur and Madame Baudoyer, Isidore's father and mother, highly respectable leather-dressers in Rue Censier, had slowly accumulated a comfortable fortune in the regular course of business. After having married their only son, to whom they gave fifty thousand francs, they concluded to live in the country, and chose the neighborhood of Ile-Adam, where they induced Mitral to join them; but they frequently came to Paris, where they kept a small sleeping-apartment in the house on Rue Censier, which they gave to Isidore on his marriage. The Baudoyers still had an income of three thousand francs, after having deducted

the marriage-portion which they had given to their son.

Monsieur Mitral was a man with an evil-looking wig, a face the color of the River Seine, lighted by two Spanish-tobacco colored eyes, as cold as a well-rope, and was always smelling a mouse, and kept the secret of his income; but he no doubt worked in his own corner, as Gigonnet worked in the Quartier Saint-Martin.

Although the circle of this family increased, neither their ideas nor their manners changed. The saint's days of father, mother, son-in-law, daughter and grand-daughter, and the anniversaries of the births and marriages were all celebrated, as were also Easter, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Twelfth Day. These festivals were the occasion of great sweepings and general cleaning up of the house, which added utility to the pleasures of these domestic ceremonies. Then followed the offerings given with much ceremony and accompanied with bouquets, and useful presents, a pair of silk stockings: a fur cap for Saillard, gold earrings, a silver dish for Elisabeth, or for her husband, to whom, little by little, a whole service of plate was being given; silk skirts for Madame Saillard, who kept them in the piece. Before receiving the present the recipient was seated in an arm-chair and asked for a certain length of time:

"Guess what we are going to give you?"

Then came a splendid dinner, which lasted five hours, to which were invited the Abbé Gaudron,

Falleix, Rabourdin, Monsieur Godard, formerly deputy-chief to Monsieur Baudoyer; Monsieur Bataille, captain of the company to which the son-in-law and father-in-law belonged. Monsieur Cardot, who was naturally invited, did as Rabourdin, he accepted one invitation out of six. At dessert the company sang, and enthusiastically embraced each other, at the same time extending wishes for all manner of happiness. They showed their presents, at the same time asking their guests what they thought of them. The day when Saillard received the fur-cap he kept it on his head during dessert, much to the general satisfaction. In the evening those who were merely acquaintances came, and there was a dance. The dancing went on for some time to the music of only one violin, but for the last six years Monsieur Godard, who was a great flute-player, contributed to the festival by adding the music of a piercing flageolet. The cook, Madame Baudoyer's nurse, old Catherine, Madame Saillard's servant, and the porter or his wife stood in the doorway of the salon to look on. The servants then received three francs to buy for themselves wine or coffee. This group of people looked upon Baudoyer and Saillard as transcendent beings, for they were employed by the government. They had attained this distinction by their merit; they worked, it was said, with the minister himself; they owed their good fortune to their talents; they were politicians; but Baudoyer was thought to be the more capable. His position as head of a bureau

presupposed much more complicated duties, much more arduous than that which was necessary for the position of cashier. Moreover, Isidore, though he was the son of a leather-dresser of Rue Censier, had had the ability to study, the hardihood to renounce his father's business and to go into the government employ, where he had attained a high position. In short, being uncommunicative, he was considered a profound thinker, and perhaps—said the Transons—he would one day become Deputy of the eighth arrondissement. While listening to these remarks, Gigonnet would often shut his lips even tighter than usual, and glance at his great-niece Elisabeth.

In person Isidore was a man thirty-seven years of age, tall and stout, who perspired easily, and whose head resembled that of a person afflicted with water on the brain. His enormous head, covered with chestnut hair cut very short, was joined to his neck by a roll of flesh which swelled out over the collar of his coat. He had arms like Hercules, and hands worthy of a Domitian, a stomach which his sobriety kept in majestic form, according to the saying of Brillat-Savarin. His face closely resembled that of the Emperor Alexander. The Tartar type could be seen in his small eyes, in his flattened nose turned up at the end, in the expression of his mouth with its cold lips, and in his short chin. His forehead was low and narrow. Although of a lymphatic temperament, the devout Isidore was swayed by excessive conjugal passion which time did not

alter. Notwithstanding his resemblance to the firm-looking Russian Emperor and the terrible Domitian, Isidore was nothing more than a Civil Service clerk, not very capable as head of the bureau, but formed for routine work, who hid his flabby inability under such a thick covering that no scalpel could lay it bare. When making his severe studies he displayed the patience and wisdom of an ox, and his square head had deceived his parents into believing him to be an extraordinary man. Fastidious and pedantic, meddlesome and talkative, he was the dread of the clerks, to whom he made continual suggestions. He exacted all the periods and commas, rigorously enforcing the rules, and being himself so terribly punctual that no one in his bureau failed to be there before him. Baudoyer wore a blue-bottle coat with yellow buttons, a chamois vest, gray trousers and a colored cravat. He had large feet badly shod. His watch-chain was ornamented with an enormous bunch of old trinkets, among which—as late as 1824—he still wore American beans, which were fashionable in the year VII.

In the bosom of this family, which was bound together by religious ties, by the inflexibility of its manners, by one single thought—that of avarice—which became, as it were their compass, Elisabeth was forced to commune with herself instead of imparting her thoughts to others, for she felt she had no equals who could understand her. Although circumstances compelled her to judge her husband, her devotion taught her to do her best to think of

Monsieur Baudoyer in as favorable a light as possible; she showed him great respect, and honored him as the father of her daughter; her husband, the temporal power, as the vicar of Saint-Paul said. She would also have regarded it as a mortal sin to make one gesture, give one glance, say one word, which could have revealed to the stranger her true opinion of the stupid Baudoyer. She professed even a passive obedience to all his wishes. Everything that went on in the world reached her ears. She thought about these things, weighed them for herself, and judged so well of things and men that at the moment when this history commences she was the secret oracle of the two functionaries, who had both insensibly come to the conclusion to do nothing without consulting her. Old Saillard said naïvely: "Isn't that Elisabeth shrewd?" But Baudoyer, who was too foolish to escape being puffed up by the false reputation which he enjoyed in the Quartier Saint-Antoine, denied his wife's shrewdness, at the same time he profited by it. Elisabeth had foreseen that her uncle Bidault, nicknamed Gigonnet, would be very rich and would handle enormous sums of money. Enlightened by self-interest she had learned to know Monsieur des Lupeaulx better than the minister knew him. Finding herself married to a blockhead, she naturally thought that her life should have been different, but she imagined a better lot without wishing for it. All her tenderest affections found their nourishment in her love for her daughter, to whom she spared

the troubles which she had endured during her childhood, and thus she thought that she had her share in the world of affection. For her daughter's sake alone she had persuaded her father to take the great step of going into partnership with Falleix. Falleix had been introduced to the Saillards by the old Bidault, who had lent him some money on his merchandise. Falleix found *his old countryman* extortionate; he complained with frankness before the Saillards that Gigonnet had taken eighteen per cent from an Auvergnat. Old Madame Saillard had ventured to blame her uncle.

"It is just because he is an Auvergnat that I only demand eighteen per cent from him!" Gigonnet replied.

Falleix, who was twenty-eight years of age, having made a discovery and having communicated it to Saillard, appeared to carry his heart in his hand —one of Saillard's expressions—and seemed likely to make a large fortune. Elisabeth at once conceived the idea of nursing him for her daughter and herself training her son-in-law, calculating thus seven years ahead. Martin Falleix was remarkably respectful to Madame Baudoyer, for in her he recognized a superior mind. If later he were to have millions, he should always belong to her family, where he saw something of family life. Little Mademoiselle Baudoyer was already in the habit of bringing him his glass gracefully, and taking his hat.

*

Just as Monsieur Saillard was returning from the minister's house, the game of boston was at its height. Elisabeth was giving advice to Falleix. Madame Saillard was knitting in the chimney-corner, regarding the cards of the vicar of Saint-Paul. Monsieur Baudoyer, as still as a post, was employing his mind in calculating who had the cards, and sat facing Mitral, who had come from Ile-Adam for the Christmas festivities. No one disturbed himself when the cashier entered. He walked up and down the salon for some minutes, his fat face contracted by unusual meditation.

"He is always in this mood when he dines at the minister's house, which luckily happens only twice a year, otherwise it would be the end of me," said Madame Saillard. "Saillard is not made for the Civil Service. Ah! now! I hope, Saillard," she said in a loud voice, "that you will not keep on your silk breeches and that Elbeuf cloth coat here. Come, then, take them all off; there is no use in wearing them out here, *ma mère.*"

"Something ails your father," said Baudoyer to his wife when the cashier was in his room, undressing without any fire.

"Perhaps Monsieur de la Billardière is dead," Elisabeth quietly remarked; "and as he desires that

you should replace him, that is the cause of his anxiety."

"If I can be useful in any way," said the vicar of Saint-Paul, bowing, "call upon me. I have the honor to be known to the Dauphine. These are times when government offices should be given to trusted men, whose religious principles cannot be shaken."

"Listen," said Falleix. "Do men of merit, then, need protection to get places in your line? I chose well in being an iron-founder; experience teaches where to get articles of good manufacture.—"

"Sir," replied Baudoyer, "the government is the government. Never attack it in this place."

"Really," said the vicar, "you speak like the *Constitutionnel.*"

"The *Constitutionnel* never says anything else," Baudoyer replied, although he never read it.

The cashier believed that his son-in-law was as superior in talent to Rabourdin, as God was greater than Saint-Crépin, as he said; but the goodman frankly wished for this promotion. Influenced by the feeling which leads all government officials to seek for promotion,—a violent, unreflecting, brutal passion,—he desired success as he desired the Cross of the Legion of Honor, without doing anything against his conscience, and by the force of merit alone. According to his views a man who had been patient enough to stay twenty-five years in the office, behind a railing, and had worn himself out for his country, had well merited the Cross of the

Legion of Honor. In order to further the interests of his son-in-law but one thing had occurred to him, and that was to say a word or two to the wife of His Excellency in handing her the monthly salary.

"Well, Saillard, you look as though you had lost all your relations! Speak to us, my boy! Say something to us," cried his wife when he returned to the room.

Saillard made a sign toward his daughter and then turned on his heel, so that he would not have to talk politics before strangers. After Monsieur Mitral and the vicar had left, Saillard pushed back the table, seated himself in an arm-chair, and struck the attitude he always took when he was going to repeat some office-gossip—movements serving the purpose of the three knocks given at the Comédie-Française. After having made his wife, his son-in-law and his daughter promise the greatest secrecy, —for however trivial the gossip, their places, he thought, depended on their discretion,—he told them this incomprehensible enigma of the resignation of a deputy, of the very legitimate desire of the secretary-general to be elected to his place, of the minister's secret opposition to the wish of one of his firmest supporters, one of his most zealous workers; then came the question of age and qualification. This gave rise to an avalanche of suppositions penetrating the brains of the two government officials, who passed—from one to the other—foolish bread and butter speeches. Elisabeth asked three questions:

"If Monsieur des Lupeaulx is on our side, will Monsieur Baudoyer be sure of the nomination?"

"Why, zounds!" cried the cashier.

"In 1814, my uncle Bidault and Monsieur Gobseck, his friend, helped him," she thought.—"Is he still in debt?" she remarked aloud.

"Yes," said the cashier, dwelling with a hissing and piteous accent on the last letter of the word. "There has been some opposition about paying him the salary, but the higher authorities ordered it paid by check at sight.

"Where then is the des Lupeaulx estate?"

"Why, zounds! in the part of the country where your grandfather and your great-uncle, Bidault, and Falleix belong, not far from the district of the Deputy who is about to resign."

When Elisabeth's huge husband had gone to bed, she bent over him, and, although he always regarded her questions as whims, she said:

"My dear, perhaps you will obtain Monsieur de la Billardière's position."

"There you are again with your imaginations," said Baudoyer. "Let Monsieur Gaudron speak to the Dauphine, and do not meddle with politics."

At eleven o'clock, when all was quiet at the Place Royale, Monsieur des Lupeaulx left the opera to go to Rue Duphot. This was one of Madame Rabourdin's most brilliant Wednesday evenings. Many of those friends who were in the habit of going on these evenings went there after the theatre, and had increased the number of guests in her

drawing-rooms, among whom might be noticed several celebrities; for instance, Canalis, the poet; Schinner, the artist; Doctor Bianchon, Lucien de Rubempré, Octave de Camps, the Comte de Granville, the Vicomte de Fontaine; du Bruel, the vaudevillist; Andoche Finot, the journalist; Derville, who had one of the most level heads in the Palais; the Comte du Châtelet, a deputy; du Tillet, the banker; and elegant young men like Paul de Manerville, and the young Vicomte de Portenduère. As the secretary-general entered, Célestine was serving tea. This evening her costume was exceedingly becoming; she wore a gown of black velvet, without any ornaments, a black gauze scarf, her hair brushed smooth, and done up in a thick braid, while on each side of her head hung curls, after the English fashion. This woman was especially remarkable for the négligé Italian grace of her artistic movements, the ease with which she understood everything, and the grace with which she cordially welcomed the slightest desire of her friends. By nature she was endowed with a slender figure, which could turn gracefully at the first word of interrogation, black eyes of Oriental shape, able, like those of the Chinese, to see out of their corners. She knew how to manage her sweet, sympathetic voice in such a way as to throw a tender charm over all her words, even such as she spoke hap-hazard. Her feet were like those seen in portraits, where the painters boldly lie in treating the feet of their models,—the only way in which

they can flatter without compromising anatomy. Her complexion, which was rather inclined to be yellow by day-light, like that of brunettes, was brilliant by lamp-light, which heightened the lustre of her hair and black eyes. In short, her slender and nimble form reminded the artist of the Venus of the Middle Ages found by Jean Goujon, and the illustrious statue of Diane de Poitiers.

Des Lupeaulx stopped at the door and leaned his shoulder against the jamb. This man, who pried so closely into every idea, was not loath to pry into sentiment, for this woman interested him much more than any of the others with whom he was in any way associated. Des Lupeaulx had reached that age when men have an excessively high standard of woman. The first gray hairs lead to the latest passions, the more intense because they are master of a power about to end, and which will be followed by the feebleness of age. Forty years is the age of follies, the age when a man wishes to be loved for himself, for then his love is not self-sustaining, as is the case in early youth, when one can be happy in loving thoughtlessly after the manner of Chérubin. When forty years of age a man wishes everything, yet fears he will obtain nothing, while at twenty-five years of age his life is so rushed, that he does not think of wanting anything but what he has. When twenty-five years of age, he rushes ahead with such force that he can waste it with impunity, but when forty years of age he mistakes abuse for power. The thoughts which took

MADAME RABOURDIN'S WEDNESDAY

This woman was especially remarkable for the négligé Italian grace of her artistic movements, the ease with which she understood everything, and the grace with which she cordially welcomed the slightest desire of her friends. By nature she was endowed with a slender figure.

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possession of des Lupeaulx at this moment were doubtless melancholy. The nerves of this old beau relaxed, the agreeable smile which ordinarily spread over his entire countenance, like a mask, faded, and his face became contracted. The real man then appeared, and his countenance was horrible. Rabourdin perceived him and said to himself: "What has happened to him? Is he in disgrace?" The secretary-general was only recalling how, not long ago, he had been suddenly discarded by the pretty Madame Colleville, whose designs were exactly those of Célestine. Rabourdin surprised this false statesman, whose eyes were fixed on Madame Rabourdin, and he recorded this look in his memory. Rabourdin was too keen an observer not to know des Lupeaulx through and through, and he thoroughly despised him, but, as is often the case with busy men, he never expressed his sentiments. The absorption caused by a favorite occupation is equivalent to the most clever dissimulation, so the opinions of Rabourdin were as a sealed book, as far as des Lupeaulx was concerned. The head-clerk of the department saw with sorrow that this new politician frequented his house, but he did not wish to thwart Célestine. Just then he was talking confidentially with a supernumerary who was about to play a rôle in the intrigue resulting from the now certain death of La Billardière. He watched, in a preoccupied way, both Célestine and des Lupeaulx.

Here, perhaps, it would be well to explain, as

much for foreigners as for our own people, what a supernumerary in a government office in Paris is.

The supernumerary bears the same relation to the administration that the choir-boy does to the church, that the child of the regiment does to the regiment, that the ballet-girl does to the theatre; something naïve, frank—a being blinded by illusions. Without illusions, where would we be? By inspiring us with faith, they give us strength to undergo the great hardships necessary to master the arts, and, in fact, to conquer the beginnings of all knowledge. Illusion is an immeasurable faith! Now the supernumerary has faith in the administration! he does not think it cold, cruel, and hard, as it really is. There are only two kinds of supernumeraries, the rich and the poor. The poor supernumerary is rich in hope and wants a place; the rich supernumerary is poor in spirit and wants nothing. A wealthy family is not foolish enough to place an intelligent man in the administration. The rich supernumerary is confided to the care of a head clerk, or is placed near the director-general, who initiates him into what Bilboquet—that great philosopher—would call the high comedy of the administration. The horrors of plodding drudgery are made easy for him until the time when he is appointed to some office. The rich supernumerary never alarms the other officials. The clerks know that he does not threaten their interests, for he seeks only the highest posts of the administration. About this time, many families were thinking,

"What shall we make of our sons?" The army did not offer any chance to make a fortune. Special careers, like civil engineering, the navy, mining, military engineering, or a professorship, were fenced in by rules or impracticable because of the great competition; whereas the rotary movement which metamorphosed the clerks into prefects, subprefects, assessors, receivers, etc., like the figures of a magic-lantern, was subject to no rules, to no drudgery. By this easy gap, sprang up the supernumeraries who drove in their cabriolets, who wore fine clothes, and cultivated moustachios, and were all of them as impertinent as parvenus. Journalists made enough fun of these wealthy supernumeraries, who were always a cousin, a nephew or some relation of some minister, of some deputy, or of a very influential peer. But the fellow-clerks of these supernumeraries looked up to them for protection. The poor supernumerary, the real, the only supernumerary, is almost always the son of the widow of a clerk, who lives on a meagre pension, wears herself out in taking care of her son until he can get the place of copying-clerk, and who dies leaving him near the baton of the marshal, some position as writer of deeds, order-clerk or perhaps underhead clerk. This supernumerary, who is always obliged to live where rents are low, leaves home early in the morning; for him the state of the sky is the sole Eastern Question! He goes on foot, and takes care not to get bespattered with mud, saves his clothes, counts the time he is under forced shelter

on account of a heavy shower. What subjects for contemplation! The pavements in the streets, the flagging in the boulevards and the quays were of great use to him. If, as some strange freak, you should go abroad in Paris at half-past seven or eight o'clock on a winter's morning, in the piercing cold, in the rain, or in some sort of bad weather, and you should see a timid and pale young man, without cigar, approach you, take notice of his pockets. You would certainly see there the outlines of a roll which his mother had given him, so that he might, without danger of indigestion, bridge over the nine hours between his breakfast and dinner. Besides which, the guilelessness of the supernumerary in other respects does not last long. A young man, enlightened by the brilliancy of Parisian life, soon measures the enormous distance between himself and the deputy-chief, a distance which no mathematician, neither Archimedes, Newton, Pascal, Kepler, Leibnétz nor Laplace, has been able to calculate, the distance between the cipher and the figure 1, between a problematical gratuity and a salary. It is then that the supernumerary at once perceives the impossibilities of this career; he hears the clerks talk about and explain favoritism; he discovers the intrigues of office; he sees the questionable means by which his superiors have attained their places. One, for instance, having married a young woman whose character was not without reproach, another the natural daughter of a minister of state; this one shouldered a great responsibility;

that one, possessing great talent, risked his health by excessive toil, he persevered like a mole, and one is not always capable of such prodigious efforts. Everything is known in a government office. The incapable man has a wife of great ability, who has pushed him on until he was nominated deputy; if he displays no ability for office work, he plots in the Chamber of Deputies. The wife of one has a statesman as her intimate friend. Another is the silent partner of a powerful journal. Then the disgusted supernumerary sends in his resignation. Three-quarters of the supernumeraries leave the employ of the government without having obtained even a clerkship, and those who remain are stubborn or foolish young men, who say to themselves: "I have been here for three years, and I must some time gain a position!" or else they have a vocation for this kind of work. Evidently the position of supernumerary bears the same relation to the government as that of the novice to religious orders. They are on trial, and this trial is harsh. The state discovers how many of them can bear hunger, thirst and indigence without succumbing; how many can bear incessant work without becoming disgusted; whose temperament will accept this horrible existence, or, if you like, the disease of government life. From this point of view, the position of supernumerary, far from being an infamous device of the government to obtain work gratis, should become a useful institution.

The young man with whom Rabourdin was talking

was a poor supernumerary named Sébastien de la Roche, who had walked all the way from the Rue du Roi-Doré in the Marais, on tiptoe, without having splashed his boots. He talked of "Mamma," and dared not raise his eyes in speaking to Madame Rabourdin, whose house seemed to him somewhat like the Louvre. He tried to hide his gloves, which had been cleaned with india-rubber. His poor mother had put a hundred sous in his pocket, in case it should be absolutely necessary for him to take a hand at cards, at the same time enjoining him to drink nothing, to remain standing, and to be very careful not to overturn any of the lamps, or pretty bric-a-brac placed on an étagère. His dress was of the severest black. His face was fair, his eyes were of a beautiful shade of green, with golden lights, and were in harmony with his beautiful, warm-toned hair. The poor youth occasionally looked timidly up at Madame Rabourdin, whispering to himself: "What a beautiful woman!" On his return home he would surely dream of this fairy until sleep should close his eyelids. Rabourdin had noticed that Sébastien had an aptitude for his work, and as he, himself, took the position of supernumerary seriously, he became greatly interested in this poor lad. Besides, he had guessed the misery which was the lot of this poor widow, who received only seven hundred francs pension, and whose son—who had just finished college—had necessarily used up all her savings. Thus he treated this poor supernumerary with paternal care; he often argued with

the council to give him a fee, and sometimes he even took it from his own purse—when the discussion between himself and those who distributed the fees became too animated. Then he overwhelmed Sébastien with work; he trained him, he made him fill the place of du Bruel, the playwright, known in dramatic literature, and advertised publicly as Cursy, and who paid Sébastien three hundred francs out of his salary. In the minds of Madame de la Roche and her son, Rabourdin was at the same time a great man, a tyrant and an angel; on him hung all their hopes. Sébastien's eyes were always fixed on the time when he should pass beyond a clerkship. Ah! the day when the supernumeraries signed receipts for their salaries was a bright day for them! They have all long handled their first month's salary, all of which they had not given to their mothers! Venus always smiles on these first-fruits of the ministerial chest. This hope in Sébastien's case could not be realized except through Monsieur Rabourdin, his only protector; thus his devotion to his chief was boundless. The supernumerary dined twice a month at Rue Duphot, but only en famille, and when brought there by Rabourdin; Madame never invited him except to dances when partners were wanted. The heart of this poor supernumerary beat hard when he saw the grand des Lupeaulx often drive up in the state carriage at half-past four, while he unrolled his umbrella at the door of the minister of state, to go on his way to the Marais. The secretary-general,

on whom his future depended, he who could, by a word, give him a place worth twelve hundred francs—yes, twelve hundred francs was the height of his ambition; with this salary he and his mother could be very happy!—Ah, well, this secretary-general did not know him! Then, des Lupeaulx was scarcely conscious of the existence of a Sébastien de la Roche. And if the son of La Billardière, the rich supernumerary of the office over which Baudoyer presided, should also be at the door, then des Lupeaulx never omitted saluting him with an amicable bow. Monsieur Benjamin de la Billardière was a son of the cousin of a minister of state.

At that moment Rabourdin was scolding this poor little Sébastien, the only person who was in his entire confidence in this great undertaking. The supernumerary copied and recopied the famous statement, which covered one hundred and fifty great folio sheets, besides the corroborative documents, the résumé which covered one page, and the estimates bracketed, the headings in an English hand and the sub-headings in a round handwriting. Enthusiastic in consequence of his participation in the mechanical part of this great idea, the lad of twenty would write over a section for having made a small erasure, he took pride in retouching his writing, regarding it as the element of this noble enterprise. Sébastien committed the imprudence of taking to the office a paper containing facts most dangerous to divulge, so that he might finish copying it. This document was an account of the general condition

of the clerks in the central government of all the ministries in Paris, with facts concerning their fortunes, present and future, together with their individual enterprises outside of their position.

In Paris all government clerks who are not endowed, like Rabourdin, with patriotic ambition or some superior ability, add to their salaries the profits of some industry to help them to gain enough to live on. Some do, as Monsieur Saillard did, when he put his money in trade carried on by others, and spent his evenings in keeping the books of his partner. Many clerks are married to needle-women, to retail tobacco dealers, or to women who have charge of lottery offices, or reading-rooms. Some, like the husband of Madame Colleville, Célestine's rival, perform in the orchestra at the theatre. Others, like du Bruel, write vaudevilles, comic operas, melodramas, or direct the play. Among these we may mention Messieurs Seurin, Pixérécourt, Planard, etc. Pigault-Lebrun Piis, Duvicquet were, in their day, in government employ. The head librarian of Monsieur Scribe was a clerk in the Treasury.

Besides such information, the memorandum made by Rabourdin contained an examination into the moral and physical characteristics necessary for those who should be able to recognize intelligence, aptitude for work and good health, three indispensable conditions in men who would have to endure the burden of public office, and who must do their business quickly and thoroughly. But this great work, the result of ten years of experience, of a long

acquaintance with men and things, obtained by coming in contact with the principal functionaries of the different ministries, would have—for those who did not see to what it led—the air of a government spy. If a single page of this document should be read, Monsieur Rabourdin would be lost. Sébastien—who admired his chief unreservedly—was still ignorant of the malice of the civil service, and had the follies of guilelessness, as well as all its graces. Thus, although he had already been scolded for bringing this work to the office, he now acknowledged his fault without reserve; he told how he had put away the memorandum and the copy in a portfolio where no one could find them; but when he perceived the extent of his offence, tears rolled from his eyes.

"Come, sir," said Rabourdin to him, kindly, "let us have no more imprudence, but do not be in despair about it. To-morrow go to the office very early. Here is the key of a small safe which is in my revolving secretary; it is closed with a combination lock. You can open it by spelling the word *ciel* and you will lock therein the copy and memorandum."

This proof of confidence dried the tears of the amiable supernumerary, whom Rabourdin pressed to take a cup of tea and some cakes.

"Mamma has forbidden me to drink tea, on account of my chest," said Sébastien.

"Very well, dear child," said the imposing Madame Rabourdin, who made a parade of being

gracious, "here are some sandwiches and cream, come, sit down by me."

She forced Sébastien to sit next her at table, and the heart of the poor lad beat in his throat as he felt the gown of this divinity brush his coat. At this moment the beautiful Madame Rabourdin perceived Monsieur des Lupeaulx, smiled at him, and, instead of waiting until he came to her, she approached him.

"Why do you remain there as if you were angry with us?" she said.

"I was not sulking," he replied. "I came to tell you some good news, yet I cannot but think that you will now be even more severe toward me. I fancy that in six months from now I will be almost a stranger to you. Yes, you have too much wit, and I—I have too much experience—I am too blasé, if you prefer—for either of us to deceive the other. Your end is attained without costing you more than a few smiles and gracious words—"

"Deceive each other! What are you saying?" she cried, in an apparently hurt tone.

"Yes, Monsieur de la Billardière is worse to-day than he was yesterday, and, from what the minister of state said, I think your husband will be nominated chief of the division."

He then recounted what he called his scene at the minister's house, the jealousy of the countess, and also told what she had said about the invitation which he had asked for Madame Rabourdin.

"Monsieur des Lupeaulx," said Madame Rabourdin

with dignity, "permit me to tell you that my husband is the oldest head-clerk of the service, and also the most capable; beside, the nomination of that old La Billardière was a favoritism which made so much talk in the office, that my husband remained in the service for another year. Thus we have neither competitor nor rival."

"All that is true."

"Very well," she resumed, while smiling and showing the most beautiful teeth in the world. "How can the friendship I have for you be sullied by the thought of self-interest? Do you think me capable of that?"

Des Lupeaulx made a gesture of admiring denial.

"Ah!" she cried, "the heart of woman will always remain a secret for the cleverest among you. Yes, I have, with the greatest pleasure, seen you come here, and, at the foundation of my pleasure, there was an interested motive."

"Ah!"

"You have," she whispered to him, "a boundless future. You will be deputy, then minister!"—what a great pleasure for an ambitious man to hear such words whispered in his ear by the sweet voice of a pretty woman!—"Oh! I know you better than you know yourself. Rabourdin is a man who will be of immense service to you in your career; he will do the drudgery when you are occupied in the Chamber of Deputies. Just as you hope to gain a position in the ministry, I desire that Rabourdin should be in the council of state, and general director. I, therefore, have the idea of uniting two men who

never can be in each other's way, but who will be able to help each other powerfully. Is that not a rôle for a woman to play?"

"As friends, you will both rise faster, and it is time for both of you to bestir yourselves! I have burned my ships," she added, smiling. "You are not as frank with me as I am with you."

"You will not listen to me," he said, with a melancholy air, notwithstanding the deep inward content which Madame Rabourdin's remarks gave him. "What would those future promotions be to me, if you dismiss me now?"

"Before listening to you," she said, with all her Parisian vivacity, "we must be able to understand one another."

And she left the old beau to go and speak with Madame de Chessel, a provincial countess, who seemed about to leave.

"This is a very extraordinary woman," said des Lupeaulx to himself. "I don't know myself when talking to her."

Thus this roué, who six years before had kept a ballet-girl, and who now, thanks to his position, made himself a seraglio with the pretty wives of the clerks, who lived in the society of journalists and actresses, became very much devoted to Célestine during the entire evening, and was the last to leave the house.

"At last," thought Madame Rabourdin, while she was undressing, "we have gained the position! Twelve thousand francs a year, gratuities and the

revenue from our farm at Grajeux. All that added together will make twenty-five thousand francs. That is not wealth, neither is it penury."

Célestine went to sleep dreaming of her debts, in thinking that by annually reserving six thousand francs she could, in the course of three years, pay them all off. She was far from imagining that a woman who had never put her foot in a drawing-room, that a little middle-class woman, selfish and scolding, bigoted and hidden in the Marais, insignificant and without acquaintances, would dream of carrying by storm the position in which she had placed her Rabourdin beforehand. Madame Rabourdin would have despised Madame Baudoyer if she had known that she was going to have her for an antagonist, for she was ignorant of the power of pettiness, which, like a worm, gnaws the elm-tree by cutting a circle under the bark.

If it were possible for literature to use the microscope of the Lewenhoek, the Malpighis, and the Raspails—which Hoffmann of Berlin tried to do—and if we could magnify and then picture these shipworms, which brought Holland to the brink of ruin by gnawing the dykes, perhaps we could produce creatures, somewhat resembling Messieurs Gigonnet, Mitral, Baudoyer, Saillard, Gaudron, Falleix, Transon, Godard and Company, borers who had shown their undermining power in the thirtieth year of this century. But now let us look at the worms that crawled in the government offices, where the principal scenes of this book were prepared.

*

In Paris, nearly all government bureaus resemble each other. Into whatever ministry you penetrate to solicit the least redressment of wrongs, or the most trivial favor, you will find the same dark corridors, ill-lighted passages, doors pierced like the boxes of the theatre, with an oval glass resembling an eye, and through which one can see phantasies worthy of Callot, and on which are incomprehensible signs. When you have discovered the person you are looking for, you find yourself in an ante-room, where the office-boy presides; in the second are the inferior clerks; the office of an under-chief follows to the right or to the left; finally, farther on, or above that of the head of the office. As to the important personage called chief of the division under the Empire, then director under the Restoration, and now again called chief of the division, he lives either above or below his two or three offices, sometimes next to the apartments of one of his chiefs. His apartment is always of larger size, an advantage much prized in this honey-comb of a bee-hive, called a ministry or general direction, if even one general direction still exists! Now, nearly all the ministries have absorbed these administrations, which were formerly separated. In this agglomeration the general directors have lost all their brilliancy by losing their

establishment, their followers, their drawing-rooms and their little court. Who would recognize, to-day, in the man who walks to the treasury, and then has to climb to the second story, the director-general of forests, or of the indirect taxes, formerly lodged in a magnificent house, in Rue Sainte-Avoye, or Rue Saint-Augustin? Who would, in him, recognize a counsellor, often a minister of state and a Peer of France?—Messieurs Pasquier and Molé, among others, were contented with general directorships after having been ministers, thus putting in practice the words of the Duke d'Antin to Louis XIV.: "Sire, when Jesus Christ died on Friday, He knew very well that He would return on Sunday."—If, in losing his luxurious surroundings, the director-general had gained an administrative advancement, the wrong would not have been so great; but now, this personage, after great efforts, is obliged to take the position of *maître des requêtes,* with a wretched salary of some twenty thousand francs. As a symbol of his former power, he is allowed an officer who wears short breeches, silk stockings, a French coat, if, however, the officer has not been lately changed.

In the administrative sense, a bureau consists of a lad, several supernumeraries—who do the work gratis for a certain number of years—several copying-clerks, writers of bills, order-clerks, or head-clerks, deputy-chief and chief of the bureau. The divisions, which comprise, ordinarily, two or three bureaus, cover sometimes even more. Their names vary according to the administrations; for instance,

there is sometimes an auditor instead of order-clerk, a bookkeeper, etc. The first room, where the office-boy is seated, is paved like the corridor, and hung with a cheap paper, and is furnished with a stove, a large black table, pens, inkstand, sometimes running water, and we must not forget to mention the benches. But there are no mats for the public to wipe their feet on. The clerk of the bureau, seated in his comfortable arm-chair, rests his feet on matting instead. The office of the clerks is a large apartment more or less well lighted, but rarely has a parquet floor. Wooden floors and fire-places are especially affected by the heads of the bureau and the division, as well as wardrobes, mahogany bureaus and tables, arm-chairs covered with red or green morocco, divans, silk curtains and other objects of administrative luxury. The clerk's office is furnished with a stove, the pipe of which fits in a walled-up chimney, if there happens to be a chimney. The wall paper is plain, green or brown. The tables are of black wood. The ingenuity of the clerks shows itself in their manner of making themselves comfortable. The chilly one has a kind of wooden foot-stool under his feet, the man with a bilious-sanguine temperament has a rush-matting, the lymphatic man, who dreads draughts caused by the opening of doors and other causes of the changing of the temperature, makes a little screen with the boxes. There is a closet where each clerk keeps his business coat, his linen sleeves and eye-shades, caps, skull-cap and other

things necessary for the business. The mantelpiece is nearly always ornamented with decanters filled with water, glasses and the débris of breakfast. In certain dark places there are lamps. The door of the under-head clerk's office remains open, so that he can watch his clerks, hinder them from talking too much, or so that he can go and speak with them on great occasions. The furniture of the offices indicates to the observer, if need be, the rank of those who occupy them. The curtains are white or colored, cotton or silk material; the chairs are of cherry-wood or mahogany, with seats of straw, leather or some other material; the wall-papers are more or less fresh. But to whichever administration all this government furniture belongs, when the minister of state is through with it, no stranger history can be imagined than that which belongs to this furniture which has seen so many masters, so many governments, and which has met with so many disasters. Besides this, of all movings in Paris the most grotesque are those of the administrations. Even the genius of Hoffmann, this singer of the impossible, has not been able to invent anything more fantastic. No attention is paid to what passes in the carts. The boxes gape open, leaving a train of dust in the streets. The tables can be seen placed in the carts with their four legs in the air, and the moth-eaten arm-chairs, the incredible tools with which France is ruled, have a terrible aspect. They resemble at the same time theatre property and clown's apparatus, just as one perceives on

the obelisks intelligible traces and remains of writing which are troublesome to decipher, as everything is that one sees but cannot comprehend as to its purposes. In short, everything is so old, so used up and so faded that the utensils of the dirtiest kitchen are infinitely more agreeable to see than the utensils of the administrative kitchen.

Perhaps, by giving a description of the division of Monsieur de la Billardière, the foreigner and those living in the provinces can form an exact idea of the internal customs of the offices, for these principal features are doubtless common to all European administrations. At first, and before everything, picture to yourself a man thus described in the *Annuaire:*

CHIEF OF DIVISION.

"Monsieur le Baron Flamet de la Billardière—Athanase-Jean-François-Michel—formerly grand-provost of the department of La Corrèze, gentleman in ordinary of the bed-chamber, *maître de requêtes* extraordinary, president of the college of the department of Dordogne, officer of the Legion of Honor, Knight of Saint-Louis, and of the foreign orders of Christ, of Isabelle, of Saint-Wladimir, etc.; member of the Academy of Gers and of several other learned societies, vice-president of the Society of Belles-lettres, member of the Association of Saint-Joseph, and of the Society of Prisons, one of the Mayors of Paris, etc., etc."

This personage, who took so much typographical display, at this time occupied a space only five feet six inches, by thirty-six inches, in a bed. His head was done up in a cotton night-cap, tied by flame-colored ribbons. He was attended by the illustrious

Desplein, the King's surgeon, and also by the young Doctor Bianchon, flanked by two old female relatives, surrounded by vials, bandages, remedies and various mortuary instruments, and watched over by the curate of Saint-Roch, who was persuading him to think of his salvation. His son, Benjamin de la Billardière, asked both doctors every morning: "Do you think that I shall have the good fortune of keeping my father?" Even this very morning the heir had transposed the word good fortune into misfortune.

La Billardière's division occupied a space seventy-one feet long on the top floor in the ministerial ocean of a magnificent mansion at the north-east of a court where formerly were stables, at this time occupied by Clergeot's division. A landing separated the two offices, whose doors were labeled, the entire length of a vast corridor lighted with borrowed lights. The private offices and antechambers of Messieurs Rabourdin and Baudoyer were underneath on the second story. After Rabourdin's were the antechamber, the salon, and the two offices of Monsieur de la Billardière.

On the first floor, which was divided in two by an entresol, were the lodgings and office of Monsieur Ernest de la Brière, a mysterious and powerful personage, who must be described in a few words, for he well merits a parenthesis. This young man was, during the entire time of this administration, private secretary to the minister. His apartment communicated by means of a secret door with the

private office of His Excellency, for, in addition to the working office, there was another in harmony with the grand apartments where His Excellency received, so that he might work by turns with his private secretary without interruption, and confer with the great personages without the presence of his secretary. A private secretary bears the same relation to the minister that des Lupeaulx did to the ministry. Between the young La Brière and des Lupeaulx there were the same differences as between the aide-de-camp and the chief of staff. This ministerial apprentice decamps and returns just when his protector does. If the minister enjoys the royal favor, or still has parliamentary hopes, when he falls, he takes his secretary away with him, and when he is restored to office this secretary returns also; otherwise he puts him to graze in some administrative pasture—for instance, in the Court of Exchequer, that refuge where secretaries wait until the storm has dissipated. This young man is not precisely a statesman, but he is a political character, and sometimes his politics are confined to the interests of one man. When one thinks of the infinite number of letters he has to open and read, besides his other occupations, is it not evident that a monarchical government would pay a high price for his services? A drudge of this kind costs Paris between ten and twenty thousand francs a year; but this young man enjoys the opera-boxes, the invitations and the carriages of the minister. The Emperor of Russia would be very glad

to have, for a salary of forty-thousand francs a year, one of those amiable, constitutional poodles, so gentle and so well curled, so caressing, so docile, so marvelously well got up,—a good watch-dog and faithful! But the private secretary is produced, obtained, discovered and developed only in the forcing-house of a representative government. In a monarchy there are only courtiers and vassals; whereas under a constitutional government you are served, flattered and caressed by men who are free. In France, ministers of state are better off than women and kings; they have some one who understands them. Perhaps one ought to pity private secretaries as much as women and white paper; they suffer everything. Like a chaste woman, they must only use their talents secretly, and for the good of the ministers to whom they are attached. If they display talent in public, they are lost. A private secretary is, then, a friend given by the government. Let us return to the offices!

Three men-servants lived peacefully in the Billardière division, to wit: one servant for the two offices, another to wait on the two chiefs, and the third, who belonged to the director of the division. All three were warmed and clothed by the state, and wore the well-known livery, of king's blue, with red bands on ordinary occasions, and broad braid, red, white and blue on state occasions. La Billardière's man held himself like a gentleman-usher. This he did to flatter the self-esteem of the cousin of the minister of state. The secretary-general

tolerated this innovation, which gave dignity to the administration. These servants, veritable pillars of the ministers, experts in all the ways of government officials, wanted for nothing. They were comfortably housed, lived at the expense of the state, grew rich by their humble savings, and knew the government officers through and through. They had no other means of amusing themselves than by observing these men, and studying their peculiarities. They also knew to what point they could trust them with loans, besides doing their commissions with the greatest discretion; they pawned and took out of pawn, bought up bills when due, and lent money without interest; but no clerk ever borrowed the smallest sum without returning a bonus; the sums borrowed were small, and were repaid soon with high rate of interest. These servants without masters received nine hundred francs salary; New Year's gifts and gratuities brought their emoluments to twelve hundred francs, and they were in a position to gain almost as much more from the clerks, for the breakfasts of those whose breakfasts they served. In certain ministries the concierge provided these breakfasts. The position of concierge to the minister of finance was formerly worth nearly four thousand francs, as for instance to the jolly Thuillier, whose son was a clerk in La Billardière's division. Sometimes these servants had five-franc pieces slipped into their hand by solicitors pressed for time; these gifts they received as a matter of course. The

oldest wore the state livery at the offices of the ministry only, and at other times wore their ordinary clothes.

The office-clerk, who was also the richest, imposed upon the majority of the clerks. He was sixty years of age, had white hair, cut short like a brush, was thick-set, stout, with the neck of an apoplectic, a common, pimpled-face, gray eyes and a mouth like a stove; such was the outline of Antoine, the oldest servant in the ministry. Antoine had brought his two nephews, Laurent and Gabriel, from Echelles in Savoy, and placed them, one as servant to the heads of the offices, the other as servant to the director. They were clad in full cloth costume, like their uncle: were between thirty and forty years old, had the physiognomy of porters, and were receivers of checks in the evening at a royal theatre, which places were procured for them through La Billardière's influence. These two Savoyards were married to clever lace-cleaners who also darned woolen fabrics. The uncle was not married; he and his nephews and their wives lived together in better style than most of the underchiefs. Gabriel and Laurent, who had scarcely had their place for ten years, had not yet come to distrust the methods of the government; they appeared in livery, as proud as dramatic authors after a great financial success. Their uncle, whom they served with fanatical devotion and who seemed to them to be a shrewd man, initiated them gradually into the mysteries of the government machinery. All three

came to open the offices and to clean them, between seven and eight every morning; they then read the newspapers or talked politics after their fashion, and conversed about the business of the division with the other servants, exchanging among themselves the gossip of their positions—just like modern domestics who have full knowledge of their masters' affairs, they were at the ministry like spiders in the centre of their web, where they felt the slightest movement.

On Thursday morning, the day after the ministerial reception, and that of Rabourdin, at the moment when the uncle was dressing his beard, assisted by his two nephews, in the ante-chamber of the second story, they were surprised by the unexpected arrival of one of the clerks.

"This is Monsieur Dutocq," said Antoine, "I know him by his stealthy step. He always seems to be skating, this man! He is on your back before you dream which way he came. Yesterday, contrary to his custom, he remained in the office of the division after every one had left, something he has not done three times since he has been at the ministry."

Thirty-eight years of age, and oblong face and bilious complexion; gray, frizzled hair always cut close to his head; a low forehead, heavy eyebrows; which met; a crooked nose, and tight shut lips; light green eyes which evaded the person to whom he was talking; a tall figure, the right shoulder slightly higher than the left; brown coat, black

vest, silk cravat, yellowish trousers, black woolen stockings, and shoes with draggling bows. Such is Monsieur Dutocq, order clerk in Rabourdin's office. Incapable and idle, he hated his chief. Nothing more natural. Rabourdin had no vice calling for flattery, and no bad side to his character by which Dutocq could make himself useful. Far too noble to injure a clerk, Rabourdin was also too clear-sighted to allow himself to be deceived by outward appearances. Dutocq therefore held his place solely through Rabourdin's generosity, and would despair of all advancement if his chief should be head of the division. Although he was conscious that he was incapable of occupying a higher place, Dutocq knew enough about government offices to see that incapacity does not hinder advancement. He would make up for it by finding a Rabourdin among his clerks, for the example of La Billardière was impressive and fatal. Wickedness combined with self-interest, is in such cases equivalent to much intelligence; very wicked and very selfish, this clerk tried to consolidate his position by making himself the spy of the offices. After 1816 he assumed a profoundly religious phase, foreseeing the favors which the fools of that age would indiscriminately bestow on those who were called by them Jesuits. Belonging to that sect, without, however, being admitted to its mysteries, Dutocq went from one office to another, penetrated into the consciences of people by making unseemly jests, and then paraphrased his *reports* to des Lupeaulx, whom he

informed of the slightest circumstances. He often astonished the minister by his great knowledge of private affairs. Really a silly fellow in the sense of political silliness, Dutocq aspired to the honor of carrying the secret messages of des Lupeaulx, who tolerated this vile man, thinking that chance might make him useful, were it only to get him, or some great personage, out of trouble by a shameful marriage. They understood each other well. Dutocq counted on such a stroke of good fortune, and remained a bachelor. He had succeeded Monsieur Poiret, the elder, who, retired to a bourgeois boarding-house, was superannuated in 1814 on a small pension, a time when these great reforms were introduced among the clerks. He lived on the fifth floor, Rue Saint-Louis-Saint-Honoré, near the Palais-Royal, on a side street. He had such a passion for collecting old engravings that he wanted all the works of Rembrandt and Charlet, as well as all those of Sylvestre, Audran, Callot, Albert Dürer, etc. Like most people who make collections and those who do their own housework, he pretended that he bought everything very cheap. He lived in a boarding-house in Rue de Beaune, and passed the evenings in the Palais-Royal, sometimes going to the theatre, thanks to du Bruel, who gave him an author's ticket once a week. One word about du Bruel.

Although Sébastien did du Bruel's work and received the poor compensation already mentioned, du Bruel still went to the office, but solely as a

make-believe so that he could be called under-head-clerk and draw the salary. He wrote up the small theatres for one of the ministerial daily papers, for which he also wrote articles which were ordered by the ministers: a position recognized, definite and unassailable. Du Bruel was, moreover, not wanting in any of those little diplomatic devices which could win him the general good-will. He offered Madame Rabourdin a box at the theatre every first night, called for her in a carriage, and escorted her home, an attention which she appreciated highly. Rabourdin, who was very tolerant and not at all strict with his clerks, allowed him to go to the theatre and return when it suited him, and to work on his vaudevilles during office hours. The Duc de Chaulieu knew that du Bruel was busy writing a novel which he was going to dedicate to him. This under-head-clerk, dressed with the carelessness of a vaudevillist, wore, in the morning, trousers strapped down, list slippers, a waistcoat which had been repaired, an olive overcoat and a black cravat. In the evening he wore an elegant costume, for then he posed as a gentleman. Du Bruel lived, and for good reasons, in the house of Florine, an actress for whom he wrote parts. Florine lived at that time in the same house with Tullia, a dancer, who was more remarkable for her beauty than for her talent. This environment gave the under-head-clerk the opportunity of often seeing the Duc de Rhétoré, the eldest son of the Duc de Chaulieu, a favorite with the king. It was through Chaulieu's influence

that du Bruel had obtained the Cross of the Legion of Honor, after writing an eleventh piece for the occasion. Du Bruel, or, if you prefer, Cursy, was now busy writing a play in five acts for the Français. Sébastien had a great affection for du Bruel, for through him he had received several tickets for the parterre, in return for which he applauded with the enthusiasm of youth all the parts which du Bruel indicated to him were of doubtful merit. Sébastien regarded him as a writer of exceptional talent. Du Bruel once said to Sébastien, the day after a first representation of a vaudeville—produced, like all vaudevilles, by three collaborators—in some parts of which the gallery hissed:

"The public recognized those scenes written by two."

"Why do you not write it all yourself?" naïvely asked Sébastien.

There were excellent reasons why du Bruel did not work alone; he was only the third of an author. A dramatic author—as few people know—is composed of: first, a *man with ideas,* who finds the subject and plans the outline or scenario of the vaudeville; second, the *hard worker,* who drafts the piece; and lastly, the *practical man,* who sets the couplets to music, arranges the choruses and concerted pieces, and the songs to add to the scene. The practical man also took charge of the receipts; that is to say, he superintended the composition of the advertisements, at the same time not forgetting to mention that to-morrow a society play would be

produced. Du Bruel, a hard worker, read the new books at the office, extracted their best sentences and kept them to adorn his dialogue. Cursy—his theatrical name—was valued by his collaborators on account of his great exactitude; with him as a helper, the man of ideas felt that he was sure of being understood, and therefore folded his hands. The clerks of the division liked the vaudevillist well enough to go in a body to his plays and to support them, for he merited the title of *good fellow.* His hand was always in his pocket, and he cheerfully paid for ices and punches, and would lend fifty francs without ever asking for their return. Du Bruel owned a country-house at Aulnay, besides having money invested; his salary amounted to four thousand five hundred and he received a pension of twelve hundred francs from the civil list and eight hundred from the three hundred thousand francs voted by the Chamber for encouraging the arts. Add to these divers sums nine thousand francs earned by his *quarters, thirds* and *halves* of plays in three different theatres, and you will understand that physically he would be large, stout, fat, round and present the appearance of a good capitalist. As to du Bruel's morals, he truly loved Tullia, and so felt that she preferred him to the brilliant Duc de Rhétoré, who was supposed to be her lover.

Dutocq had not seen without alarm what he chose to call the liaison of des Lupeaulx with Madame Rabourdin, and his secret anger increased. Besides he had too keen an eye not to perceive that

Rabourdin was devoting himself to a great work outside of his official labors, and he was in despair because he knew nothing about it, while little Sébastien was either partly or completely let into the secret. Dutocq tried to connect himself with Monsieur Godard, Baudoyer's deputy-chief, a colleague of du Bruel, and he had accomplished it. The great esteem in which Dutocq held Baudoyer was the cause of his acquaintance with Godard; not that Dutocq was sincere in his friendship, but by praising Baudoyer and keeping silence in regard to Rabourdin he satisfied his hatred after the fashion of small minds.

Joseph Godard, a cousin of Mitral on his mother's side, had presumed on this distant relationship with Baudoyer, by aspiring to the hand of Mademoiselle Baudoyer; in consequence he thought that Baudoyer shone like a genius. He professed a high esteem for Elisabeth, and also for Madame Saillard, without having yet perceived that Madame Baudoyer was trying to nurse Falleix for her daughter. He presented Mademoiselle Baudoyer with small gifts of artificial flowers, bonbons on New Year's Day, and fancy boxes on her fête-days. He was twenty-six years of age, a worker without talent, steady as a girl, monotonous and apathetic, holding cafés, cigars and horsemanship in horror. He retired regularly at ten o'clock and arose at seven, was gifted with some social talents, such as playing contra-dances on the flageolet, which brought him into high favor with the Saillards and the Baudoyers.

He played the fife in the National Guard so that he would not have to pass the nights in the barracks. Godard gave especial attention to natural history. He made collections of minerals and of shells, and he knew how to stuff birds, and filled his room with a mass of curiosities which he had bought cheap, such as stones on which landscapes were painted, models of palaces in cork, specimens of petrified articles which came from the fountain Saint-Allyre at Clermont in Auvergne, etc. He cherished all the empty cologne bottles, in which he kept his specimens of baryta, his sulphates, salts, magnesia, corals, etc. He accumulated butterflies on frames, and decorated his walls with Chinese parasols and dried fish-skins. Godard lived with his sister, a flower-maker in Rue de Richelieu. Although much admired by mothers of families, this model young man was despised by his sister's work-girls, and especially by the cashier, who for some time past had hoped to *catch* him. He was not only thin and lank, of medium height, with dark circles around his eyes, and scant beard, and killing, as Monsieur Bixiou would say, flies on the wing; and he took little care of his person, his clothes were badly cut, his trousers were large and hung like a bag; he wore white stockings no matter what the weather, a hat with a small rim and laced shoes. When at the office in a cane-seated arm-chair, with a hole in the centre and ornamented with a band of green morocco, he complained much of his digestion. His chief vice was getting up parties for the country

on Sundays, during the summer, to Montmorency, dinners spread on the grass, and drinking milk and cream on the Boulevard du Montparnasse. For the last six months Dutocq began to visit Mademoiselle Godard occasionally, hoping to effect some affair in that house in discovering there some female treasure.

Thus Baudoyer had in his offices these two preachers, Dutocq and Godard. Monsieur Saillard, who was incapable of fathoming the character of Dutocq, sometimes made him short visits in the office. The young La Billardière, who was placed with Baudoyer as supernumerary, belonged to this clique. The talented men in the office laughed heartily at the banding together of these incapable clerks. Baudoyer, Godard and Dutocq had been nicknamed by Bixiou *The Trinity without the Spirit* and the little La Billardière was called *The Paschal Lamb.*

"You are early this morning," said Antoine to Dutocq laughingly.

"And you, Antoine," Dutocq replied, "you see that the newspapers sometimes come earlier than we receive them."

"To-day, for example," said Antoine without the slightest confusion, "but they never come twice at the same hour."

The two nephews looked at each other stealthily, as if to say while admiring their uncle, "What cheek he has."

"Although I make two sous by serving breakfast," murmured Antoine, after he heard Dutocq close the

door, "I would forego the money willingly not to have him in our division."

"Ah! Monsieur Sébastien, you are not the first to-day," said Antoine to the supernumerary when he entered a quarter of an hour later.

"Who is here?" said the poor youth, turning pale.

"Monsieur Dutocq," replied Laurent, the door-keeper.

Pure natures have above all others the inexplicable gift of second sight, owing perhaps to the purity of their nervous systems, which are in some sense new. So Sébastien had guessed the hatred which Dutocq bore to the venerated Rabourdin. And scarcely had Laurent pronounced his name, when, seized by a horrible presentiment, he cried:

"I suspected it."

And he rushed into the corridor with the rapidity of an arrow.

"There will be a quarrel in the offices!" said Antoine, at the same time shaking his white head and putting on his livery. "It is very certain that the baron has just rendered himself up to his God. Yes, Madame Gruget, his nurse, told me that he could not live through the day. Will there not be a great commotion here? Will there not? Go see if all the stoves draw well! Zounds! Our world is going to fall on our heads."

"It is true," said Laurent, "that this poor young man was greatly affected when he heard that this jesuitical Monsieur Dutocq had been here before him."

"As for me, I have told him often,—for at least one ought to tell the truth to a good clerk, and he is a good clerk who, like this youth, gives punctually his ten francs on New Year's Day,"—said Antoine, "I have told him: 'The more you do, the more you will be required to do, and then you will be left behind in the promotions!' Very well, he would not listen to me; he wears himself out staying here until five o'clock, one hour later than anyone else." —He shrugged his shoulders and then continued— "All that is foolishness, he will not get on in the world that way. To prove that, there is even now no chance of his obtaining an appointment, and he would make an excellent clerk. After two years' service! That is a shame! on my word of honor."

"Monsieur Rabourdin loves Monsieur Sébastien," said Laurent.

"But Monsieur Rabourdin is not a minister," answered Antoine; "he will make things hot when he is—hens will then have teeth; he is too—well, never mind! When I think that I carry salaries to those rascals, who stay at home and do as they please, and only sign receipts for their salaries, while this poor la Roche is wearing his life away, I ask myself if God ever thinks of the government clerks! And what do these protégés of Monsieur le Maréchal and Monsieur le Duc give you? They thank you." He made a patronizing bow. "They make you a gracious bow, saying: 'Thank you, my dear Antoine.' Pack of *idle fellows,* go to your work, or you will be the cause of a revolution.

Under Monsieur Robert Lindet there was not all this confusion; as for me, such as you see me, I entered this wretched office under Robert Lindet. And under him the clerks worked. You ought to have seen these quill-drivers writing until midnight, the fire in the stoves having gone out scarcely perceived; but this was because the guillotine was there!—and let me say that when they came late they had other punishment than a late mark which they now receive."

"Father Antoine," said Gabriel, "as you are so talkative this morning, what is your idea of a clerk?"

"He is," said Antoine seriously, "a man who writes, seated in the office—But what am I saying? Without these government clerks where would we be? Go then, look to your stoves, and never speak any evil of the clerks! Gabriel, the stove in the large office draws like the devil; you must turn the damper a little."

Antoine placed himself at the landing at an angle where he could see all the officials enter from under the porte-cochère; he knew every one at the ministry and watched their gait, at the same time remarking on the contrasts in their mode of dress. Before entering into this tale it is necessary here to depict the chief characteristics of the principal actors in La Billardière's division, which besides will furnish a description of some of the varieties of the genus *clerks,* and will justify not only the observations of Rabourdin, but also the title of this study,

essentially Parisian. In fact, do not be deceived! According to the accounts of misery and originality, there are clerks and clerks, just as all men are not alike. Let us hold as distinct above all others the Paris clerk from the clerk in the country. In the country places the clerk's lot is a happy one; he has a comfortable house, a garden, and is usually comfortably fixed at the office; he drinks good wine and pays little for it, does not have to eat horse-meat, and knows the luxury of having a dessert at dinner. Instead of contracting debts, he saves money. Without knowing exactly what he spends, everyone will tell you that *he does not spend all his salary*. The mothers of families salute this young man if he be a bachelor, and if married, he and his wife go to the ball at the house of the receiver-general, the prefect, the under-prefect and the commissary. His character interests people, he rises from the ranks, he gains for himself the reputation of a man of ability, he has chances of being regretted. The whole city knows him, is interested in his wife and his children. He gives his receptions, and if he has the means, or a father-in-law in easy circumstances, he may become deputy. His wife is watched over by the particular gossips of the little towns, and if he is unhappy in his home they know it; while in Paris, a fellow clerk will know nothing about it. Besides, the government clerk in the country is *a something* while the clerk in Paris is scarcely *anything*.

The first to arrive after Sébastien was a writer

of deeds in Rabourdin's office, named Monsieur Phellion, an honorable father of a family. To the influence of his chief he owed a half-scholarship for each of his two sons in the College Henri IV.; a favor well bestowed, for Phellion had one daughter besides, who was being educated gratis in a boarding-school where his wife gave piano lessons, and where he taught a class of history and geography in the evenings. He was forty-five years old, sergeant-major of his company in the National Guard, very compassionate as far as words went, but could never be induced to give away a cent. This excellent clerk lived in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, not far from Sourds-Muets, in a house with a garden, where his premises cost only four hundred francs. Proud of his position, happy in his lot, he set about to serve the government, thought himself useful to his country, and boasted of his indifference to politics, in which he saw nothing but the POWER. Monsieur Rabourdin pleased Phellion, when he asked him to remain a half hour longer to do some work, and he then said to the Demoiselles la Grave, for he dined in Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, in the boarding-school where his wife gave music lessons:

"Ladies, my business has compelled me to remain at the office. When one is in the Civil Service, one is not one's own master!"

He compiled books of questions and answers for the use of young ladies in boarding-schools. These *little concise treatises,* as he called them, were sold

at the University library, under the name of *Historical and Geographical Catechism.* Feeling obliged to offer a copy on vellum, bound in red morocco, of each new Catechism to Madame Rabourdin, he dressed in his best when he took them: silk breeches, silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles, etc. Monsieur Phellion received on Thursday evenings after the boarding-school pupils had retired for the night. He provided beer and cakes. He and his friends played bouillotte for five sous a pool. Notwithstanding this simple entertainment, gotten up with effort on certain Thursdays, Monsieur Laudigeois, who was employed in the mayor's office, lost his ten francs. The parlor, hung with American wall-paper of a green hue with a red border, was adorned with portraits of the King, the Dauphine and Madame, with two engravings of *Mazeppa* after Horace Vernet, that of the *Pauper's Funeral* after Vigneron—"a picture wonderful to contemplate, and which according to Phellion's opinion should console the lowest class of society by proving to it that it has friends more devoted than mankind, whose love reaches far beyond the tomb." From these few words you can imagine this man who, once every year, on mourners' day, took his three children to the cemetery of l'Ouest and showed them the twenty or more yards of earth bought in the graveyard, in which place his father and his wife's mother were interred. "We will all lie here," he told them, so that they would become familiar with the idea of death. One of his

greatest pleasures was to explore the environs of Paris, which he did with a map. Having already become very well acquainted with Antony, Arcueil, Bièvre, Fontenay-aux-Roses, Aulnay—so celebrated as being the dwelling-place of many great authors —he hoped in time to know the whole western side of the environs of Paris. He destined his elder son for the administration and the second he intended to send to the Ecole Polytechnique. He often said to his eldest child, "When you have attained the distinction of being employed by the government," but he suspected that his son had a preference for the exact sciences which he tried to suppress, at the same time being willing to let him go according to his own bent if he persisted in it. Phellion had never dared to ask Monsieur Rabourdin to dine with him, although he would have thought that day one of the gayest in his life. He imagined that if he could have one of his sons follow in the footsteps of Rabourdin, he could die the happiest man in the world. He had so well sounded the praises of this worthy and respectable head of the department to the Demoiselles la Grave, that they wished to see this great Monsieur Rabourdin, as much as a young man might wish to see Monsieur de Chateaubriand. "They would be very happy," they said, "to have his daughter to educate." If perchance the carriage of the minister drove up or drove away, whether anyone was in it or not, Phellion took off his hat in the most respectful manner, and asserted that France would do much better by thus honoring

the power, even to bowing to its insignia. When Rabourdin sent for him to go downstairs, so that he could explain to him some work, Phellion paid strict attention; he listened to the slightest word of his chief like a dilettante listens to an air at the Italian opera. Silent at the office, with his feet in the air resting on a wooden desk, he never budged. He attended conscientiously to his business. He displayed the most religious gravity while writing his administrative correspondence, taking everything seriously, and transcribing in the most solemn words the orders given by the minister. This man, so particular about observing the conventionalities of life, had had a disaster in his career of writer, and such a disaster! Notwithstanding the great care with which he drew up documents, it so happened that one phrase escaped him thus expressed: "You will be at the place indicated, bringing with you the necessary papers." Happy, laughing at the expense of this innocent man, the copying-clerks, without his knowledge, consulted Rabourdin, who, knowing the character of his clerk, burst out laughing and modified the sentence by these words in the margin, "You will come to the meeting-place with all the *documents indicated.*" Phellion, to whom the correction was shown, studied it, weighed the difference of expression, and did not hesitate to say that he should have to take two hours to discover the equivalents. He said, "Monsieur Rabourdin is a man of genius!" He always thought that his colleagues had lacked due consideration for him,

by taking this so promptly to the head of the department, but he had too much respect for the rules not to know that they had a perfect right to do so, the more so as he was then absent. However, in their place, he would have waited, for the circular was not pressing. This affair caused him to lose sleep for some nights. When they wanted to make him angry they had only to allude to this unfortunate sentence by saying to him as he passed out: "Have you the necessary papers?" The worthy clerk would then return, glance witheringly at the clerks and say to them: "What you say, gentlemen, seems to me very much out of place." One day there was such a fierce quarrel on this subject that Rabourdin was obliged to intervene and to forbid the clerks to mention this sentence again. Monsieur Phellion had the face of a pensive ram, with little color, and marked by small-pox, large hanging lips, light blue eyes and a stature taller than ordinary. He was as neat about his person as should be a master of history and geography accustomed to appear before young ladies; he wore fine linen, a pleated shirt-frill, an open waistcoat of black cashmere, which showed a pair of suspenders which had been embroidered by his daughter, a diamond in his shirt, a black coat, and blue trousers. In winter he wore a nut-brown overcoat with three capes, and carried a loaded cane, which was necessary on account of the loneliness of the neighborhood in which he lived. He no longer took snuff, and cited this reform as a striking example of the

control a man could have over himself. He ascended the stairs slowly, for he feared asthma, being afflicted with what he called *adipose chest.* He greeted Antoine with dignity.

Immediately after Monsieur Phellion came a copying-clerk who formed a singular contrast to this virtuous good fellow. Vimeux was a young man twenty-five years of age, who had a salary of fifteen hundred francs, was well-made and graceful, with an elegant and romantic face, having jet black hair, beard, eyes and eyebrows, beautiful teeth, faultless hands, and wearing his moustache so thick and so well trimmed that he seemed to make capital of it. Vimeux showed such great aptitude for his work that he dispatched it quicker than any one else.

"This young man is gifted!" said Phellion, when he saw him cross his legs and not know what to do the remainder of the day, after his work was finished. "And see, he is perfection," said the clerk to du Bruel.

*

Vimeux breakfasted on a simple roll and a glass of water, dined for twenty sous at Katcomb's and lodged in a furnished room at twelve francs a month. His joy, in fact his only pleasure, was his toilet. He ruined himself by purchasing miraculous waistcoats, tight trousers, half-tight trousers, pleated or embroidered, fine boots, well-made coats which outlined his figure, bewitching collars, new gloves and hats. His hand was ornamented with a signet ring, which he wore over his glove; and provided with a beautiful cane, he tried to assume the air and manners of a rich young man. Later in the day he went, with a toothpick in his mouth, to walk in the grand avenue of the Tuileries, as though he were a millionaire who had just arisen from the table. Hoping that some woman, an English woman, or any stranger, or a widow, might fall in love with him, he studied the art of playing with his cane, and of throwing a glance which Bixiou said was *American.* He laughed so that he might show his beautiful teeth, he wore no socks, but had his hair curled every day. Vimeux, in accordance with his fixed principles, would have been willing to marry a hunchback with six thousand francs income, or a woman of forty-five with eight thousand a year, or an English woman for three thousand francs. Phellion, who was delighted

with the handwriting of this young man, took compassion on him, and tried to persuade him to give writing lessons, an honorable profession which would ameliorate his life, and would render it even agreeable, and he promised to procure this position for him at the boarding-school of the Demoiselles la Grave. But Vimeux had his own views so firmly fixed that no one could prevent him from having faith in his star. Thus he continued to promenade in the afternoons with an empty stomach, like a sturgeon of Chavet, although he had vainly displayed his enormous moustaches for three years. As Vimeux owed Antoine thirty francs for breakfasts, each time he saw him he lowered his eyes so that they should not meet those of the man to whom he was indebted; and yet when mid-day came he always asked that man to buy him a roll. Rabourdin, after trying to drive some sense into that poor head, had given him up. Monsieur Vimeux, the father, was recorder to a *justice de paix* in the department du Nord. Adolphe Vimeux had latterly economized by giving up Katcomb's and living on rolls, so that he might buy a pair of spurs and a riding-whip. He was laughed at for his matrimonial calculations, and called Pigeon-Villiaume. The jokes which were made at the expense of this fasting Amadis, were only to be attributed to the wicked genius which created the vaudeville, for he was a good companion, and harmed no one but himself. A great subject of mirth in the offices, at his expense, consisted in wagering whether he wore a

corset. Vimeux was first placed in Baudoyer's office, but he manœuvred until he was transferred to Rabourdin's, because of Baudoyer's severity in relation to the *English*—a name given by these clerks to their creditors. The English day is the day when the offices are thrown open to the public. Sure of finding their debtors there, the creditors come in swarms, they come to torment the clerks by asking when they will be paid, and threaten to obtain an attachment against their salaries. The implacable Baudoyer compelled his clerks to remain. "It was their place not to have debts," he said. He regarded his severity as something necessary for the public good. Rabourdin, on the contrary, protected his clerks from their creditors, to whom he showed the door, saying that the offices were not open for transacting private business, but for public business only. Both offices ridiculed Vimeux when his spurs clanked through the corridors and up the stairs. Bixiou, the wit of the ministry, circulated in the two divisions of Clergeot and La Billardière a paper at the head of which Vimeux was represented in caricature seated on a pasteboard horse, and inviting everyone to subscribe to buy him a real horse. Monsieur Baudoyer was down for a bale of hay, taken from his private stock, and each clerk wrote an epigram on his neighbor. Vimeux, who was really a good-natured fellow, himself subscribed under the name of *Miss Fairfax.*

Handsome clerks of the style of Vimeux have their salary on which to live and their good looks

by which to make their fortunes. Always attending the masked balls which take place during the Carnival, they hope to meet the good fortune which eludes them even there. Many of these clerks end by marrying either *modistes*, whom they accept weary of the contest, or old women, or else young girls whom their *physique* has attracted, and with whom they get up a flirtation sprinkled with stupid love-letters, but which nevertheless produce the desired result. These clerks are sometimes bold; they see a woman riding in her carriage to the Champs Elysées, they procure her address, they send her impassioned love-letters at every opportunity, and find an occasion which unhappily encourages this ignoble practice.

This Bixiou—pronounce it Bisiou—was a draughtsman who ridiculed Dutocq as well as Rabourdin, whom he nicknamed *the virtuous Rabourdin*. In order to explain the vulgarity of his chief, he called him *the Place Baudoyer;* he nicknamed the vaudevillist *Flonflon*. Without doubt the most high-minded man of the division and of the ministry, but clever after the fashion of a monkey, without aim or object, Bixiou was so useful to Baudoyer and to Godard, that they protected him notwithstanding his misconduct, and he hurried through their business very quickly. Bixiou desired the place of Godard or of du Bruel, but his conduct interfered with his advancement. Sometimes he sneered at the offices, and that was when he had just made some good hit, as the publication of the

portraits in the Fualdès case—for which he drew faces at random—or his drawings of those who figured in the debates on the Castaing case. At other times, seized by the desire to attain a higher position, he applied himself to his work; then again he left it to write a vaudeville which he never finished. An egotist, avaricious and also lavish at the same time, that is to say, he only spent his money on himself; blunt, aggressive and indiscreet, he returned evil for evil; he especially attacked the weak, respecting nothing, and believing in nothing, neither in France, in God, in art, in the Greeks, in the Turks, in Champ-d'Asile nor in the monarchy, insulting above everything what he was incapable of understanding. It was he who first painted a black cap on the head of Charles X. on a five-franc piece. He mimicked Doctor Gall when he was delivering his lectures so that the best-dressed diplomats burst their neckties laughing. The chief jokes of this terrible caricaturist consisted in heating the stoves to their utmost, so as to give colds to those who imprudently ventured out of his overheated room, and he had in addition the satisfaction of consuming the government wood. Famous for his jokes, he varied them with so much skill that he always obtained a victim. His great secret in this kind of work was to find out what each one wished; he knew the road to all the castles in Spain, to the dreams about which a man may be mystified because he is inclined to believe them himself, and he would hoodwink one for hours at a

time. Thus this profound observer, who possessed the greatest tact in playing a joke, had not the faculty of using this power to induce men to further his fortune or to advance his promotion. The person he took most pleasure in teasing was the young La Billardière, his *bête noire*, his nightmare, whom nevertheless he was constantly wheedling, so that he could torment him with greater success. He wrote him love-letters signed "Comtesse de M——," or "Marquise de B——," thus drawing him on fête-days to the foyer of the Opera, in front of the clock, and let him loose to some grisette, after having made fun of him before everyone. He allied himself with Dutocq—whom he considered a serious jester—because of his hatred toward Rabourdin and his high idea of Baudoyer, and aided him willingly. Jean-Jacques Bixiou was the grandson of a grocer in Paris. His father, who was a colonel at the time of his death, left his son under the care of his grandmother, who had married for her second husband her head-clerk, named Descoings, and who died in 1822. When the youth left college, finding himself without occupation, he attempted painting, and notwithstanding the friendship which bound him to Joseph Bridau, the friend of his childhood, he gave up painting, and devoted himself to making caricatures, vignettes, and illustrating books, which twenty years later were called *illustrations*. The protection of the Ducs de Maufrigneuse and de Rhétoré, with whom he became acquainted through the danseuses, procured him his position in 1819.

On good terms with des Lupeaulx, with whom in society he was on an equal footing, very familiar with du Bruel, he was a living example of Rabourdin's observations relative to the constant deterioration of the administrative hierarchy in Paris, through the personal importance which a man may acquire outside of the bureaus. Short, but well-formed, with delicate features, remarkable for a vague resemblance to Napoléon, thin lips, a flat, straight chin, chestnut whiskers, twenty-seven years old, blond, with thrilling voice and sparkling eye—such was Bixiou. This man, so sensible and witty, was carried away by all kinds of pleasures, which plunged him into continual dissipation. A tireless hunter after grisettes, a smoker, a jester, a man who dined out and attended many supper parties, always tuned to the highest pitch, as brilliant in the green-room as in the balls given by the grisettes in the Allée des Veuves, he was as witty at table as on a pleasure party, as gay at midnight in the streets as in the morning when he first jumped out of bed; but gloomy and sad at heart, as is the case with most comedians. Launched in the world of actors and actresses, of writers and artists, and of certain women of uncertain fortunes, he lived well, went to the play without paying, played at Frascati and often won. Moreover, this artist, really profound, but only by flashes, swung to and fro in life like a swing, without thinking of the time when the cord would break. His lively wit, his profusion of ideas, caused him to be courted

by all who were accustomed to appreciate brilliancy of intellect; but not one of his friends liked him. Incapable of withholding a witty saying, he would compromise his two neighbors at table before the first course was served. Notwithstanding his outward gaiety, the spirit of dissatisfaction with his social position would pierce his sayings; he aspired higher, while the fatal demon hidden in his soul prevented him from possessing the gravity which imposes so much on fools. He lived in Rue Ponthieu, on the second floor, where he had three rooms which were given up to the disorder of a bachelor's establishment, a true bivouac. He often talked of leaving France and of going to wrest his fortune in America. No sorcerer could foretell the future of a young man whose talents were undeveloped, who was incapable of perseverance, always intoxicated with pleasure, and who lived as rapidly as though the world were going to end to-morrow. As to his dress, he had the merit of never being ridiculous, and he was perhaps the only one of all the ministry of whom it could not be said, "There goes a government clerk." He wore elegant boots, black trousers strapped down, a fancy vest, a pretty blue coat, a collar—always presented to him by a grisette—one of Bandoni's hats, and a pair of dark kid gloves. He carried himself with the air of a cavalier, yet unaffected and not lacking in grace. Thus when he was summoned by des Lupeaulx to account for some too great impertinence toward the Baron de la Billardière, and threatened with

dismissal, he contented himself by replying: "You will take me back because I dress so well." At this des Lupeaulx could not help laughing.

The most harmless joke which Bixiou played at the office was that aimed at Godard, to whom he presented a butterfly just brought from China, which the deputy chief treasures in his collection and still shows to-day, without having recognized that it is only painted paper. Bixiou had the patience to work over the masterpiece so that he might play a hoax on his superior.

The devil always places a martyr near a Bixiou. Baudoyer's office now held the victim, a poor copying-clerk, twenty-two years old, with a salary of fifteen hundred francs. His name was Auguste-Jean-François Minard. Minard had married, for love, an artificial flower maker, a daughter of a porter; this young woman had worked at home for Mademoiselle Godard's establishment. Minard had met her in the shop in Rue de Richelieu. Being unmarried, Zélie Lorain had often dreamed of changing her condition. At first she became a pupil at the Conservatory, then by turns a dancer, a singer and an actress; she had even dreamed of doing as many working girls do, but the fear of suffering and of falling into frightful misery had preserved her from vice. She hesitated as to many courses, when Minard luckily appeared upon the scene with a proposition of marriage in his hand. Zélie earned five hundred francs a year, Minard earned fifteen hundred. Believing that they could live on two thousand francs, they

married without settlements, and started to live very economically. Minard and Zélie lived like two turtle-doves, near the Barrière de Courcelles, in an apartment on the third floor, for which they paid three hundred francs a year; with white cotton curtains to the windows, cheap Scotch paper, costing fifteen sous a roll on the walls, polished floors, walnut furniture, and a little kitchen kept very neat and clean. This apartment consisted, in the first place, of a little room in which Zélie made her flowers, then a parlor furnished with chairs upholstered in horse-hair, a round table in the centre, a mirror, a clock representing a revolving glass fountain, gilded candelabra enveloped in gauze, and a bed-room in white and blue, containing a bed, a chest of drawers, a mahogany writing-desk, a little striped rug at the foot of the bed, six arm-chairs and four chairs; and in a corner was the cradle in cherry, where her little son and daughter slept. Zélie nursed her children herself, attended to the kitchen department, made her artificial flowers, and kept her home in order. There was something touching in this happy and laborious mediocrity. Feeling that she was loved by Minard, Zélie loved him dearly. Love attracts love—it is the *abyssus abyssum* of the Bible. This poor man arose in the morning while his wife slept, and went out to get her some provisions. He carried the flowers she had finished, on his way to the office; and on returning he brought her more material to make up, then, while waiting for dinner, he cut or stamped leaves,

trimmed the stems, prepared her colors. Small, thin, wiry, nervous, with crisp red hair, eyes of a light yellow, a skin of dazzling whiteness, but marked by freckles, he was possessed of a quiet courage which made no show. He understood the science of writing as well as Vimeux. At the office he was very quiet; he did his work, and maintained the reserved air of a man who suffers and thinks. His white eyelashes and his scanty eyebrows caused the implacable Bixiou to name him *The white rabbit*. Minard—this Rabourdin in a lower sphere—was extremely desirous of placing his Zélie in better circumstances, and he searched the ocean of the wants of luxury and Parisian industry, in the hope of gaining an idea, of making a discovery, an improvement on something, thereby gaining a sudden fortune. His apparent stupidity was produced by the continual tension of his mind; he examined into the Sultana Double Paste, into Cephalic Oils, steel and flint for portable gas, jointed sockets for hydrostatic lamps, thus looking into all the infinite little inventions of material civilization. He bore Bixiou's jests as a busy man bears the humming of an insect; he was not even annoyed by them. Bixiou, notwithstanding his cleverness, never perceived the profound contempt in which Minard held him. Minard did not care to quarrel with him; he viewed it as a waste of time. Thus his persecutor was wearied out. Minard came to the office very simply clad, wearing duck trousers until October, clad in shoes and gaiters, a

goatskin vest, a beaver coat in winter and of coarse merino in summer, a straw hat or a silk hat worth eleven francs, according to the seasons, for his delight was his Zélie; he would even go without food so that he could buy her a dress. He breakfasted with his wife and ate nothing while at the office. Once a month he took Zélie to the theatre with tickets given him by du Bruel or Bixiou, for Bixiou did everything, even a kindness. Zélie's mother left her own home on such occasions and took care of the children. Minard had replaced Vimeux in Baudoyer's department. Monsieur and Madame Minard paid their visits to him on New Year's Day. In seeing them, one naturally wonders how the wife of a poor clerk, on a salary of fifteen hundred francs, could manage to have her husband dressed in a black suit, and how she could afford Leghorn hats with flowers, embroidered muslin dresses, silk mantles, prunella shoes, elaborate fichus, a Chinese parasol, and could drive up in a hackney-coach, and yet remain a virtuous woman, while Madame Colleville and such *ladies* could scarcely make both ends meet, and they had two thousand four hundred francs income!—

In these offices were two clerks who were such close friends as to seem almost ridiculous, for everything is ridiculed at the office. He who was in Baudoyer's office was named Colleville; he was chief-clerk, and if the Restoration had not taken place he would have been deputy-chief or even head-chief long before this. In Madame Colleville

he possessed a wife as superior in her way as Madame Rabourdin was in hers. Colleville—the son of a first-violin at the Opera—fell in love with the daughter of a celebrated dancer. Flavie Minoret, one of those capable and charming Parisians who know how to make their husbands happy, at the same time preserving their own liberty, made the Colleville home the resort of the best artists, and orators in the Chamber of Deputies. At her house the humble position in which Colleville was placed was scarcely referred to. Flavie's conduct—she was a little too prolific—offered such a field for scandal that Madame Rabourdin had refused all her invitations. Colleville's friend, named Thuillier, filled a place in Rabourdin's office exactly the same as Colleville's position, and like causes had hindered his administrative advancement, which had prevented Colleville's promotion. Everyone who knew Colleville knew Thuillier, and vice versa. Their friendship, which originated at the office, was brought about by the coincidence of their entering the Civil Service. The pretty Madame Colleville, so they said in the office, accepted the attentions of Thuillier, whom his wife had left without children. Thuillier, who was called the handsome Thuillier, who had had much success with the fair sex, led a life as lazy as that of Colleville was busy. Colleville was first-clarionet at the Opera Comique, he kept books in the morning, and underwent much exertion to bring up his family, although he was not without influential friends. He was regarded

as a very shrewd man, the more so that he hid his ambition under a kind of indifference. Apparently content with his lot, loving his work, he found everyone, even the chiefs, ready to further his brave career. For the last few days only, Madame Colleville had reformed her household régime, and had become very devout; by which means, it was vaguely hinted in the offices, she hoped to gain through the Church a firmer foothold than by the famous orator François Keller, one of her most constant admirers, whose influence had not yet been able to obtain a higher position for Colleville. Flavie then made the mistake of appealing to des Lupeaulx. Colleville was very fond of reading the horoscopes of famous men in the anagrams of their names. He passed entire months in taking apart and rearranging names in order to discover thereby a meaning. *Un corse la finira,* found in *Révolution Française;—Vierge de son mari ;*—from *Marie de Vigneros,* niece of the Cardinal de Richelieu;—*Henrici mei casta dea,* from *Catharina de Medicis;—Eh ! c'est large nez,* from *Charles Genest,* the abbé at the court of Louis XIV., who was greatly celebrated for his large nose which amused the Duc de Bourgogne; in short, all known anagrams were a marvel to Colleville. Raising the anagram to the level of a science, he pretended that the lot of every man was written in the phrase which was produced by the combination of the letters of his name, Christian name and title. Ever since the accession of Charles X., he busied himself over the anagram of

the king. Thuillier, who sometimes made puns, pretended that an anagram was a pun in letters. That Colleville, who was a man of feeling, should be so indissolubly attached to Thuillier, a model egotist, presented an insoluble problem which many clerks of the division explained after this fashion: "Thuillier is rich and Colleville's housekeeping weighs upon him heavily!" In other words, Thuillier was thought to add to the emoluments of his position the advantages of the discount. He was often sought for to confer with merchants, with whom he had conferences in the court, which lasted several minutes, about Mademoiselle Thuillier, his sister. This friendship, consolidated by time, was based on sentiment, on very natural foundations which will find mention elsewhere—see *Les Petits Bourgeois*—which if given here would come under the heading called by the critics tedious. Notwithstanding this it may not be useless to make this observation, that if Madame Colleville was well known in the bureaux, Madame Thuillier's existence was almost unknown. Colleville, an active man, who had children to bring up, was fat, round and jolly, while Thuillier, *the beau of the Empire*, without apparent cares, was lazy, slender, and had a pale and almost melancholy face.

"We never know," said Rabourdin, in speaking of these two clerks, "whether our friendships are oftener born of contrasts or of resemblances."

Unlike the Siamese twins, Chazelle and Paulmier were two clerks who were always at war; one of them

smoked, the other took snuff, and they disputed incessantly as to which was the best way of using tobacco. One fault which was common to both and which rendered them each equally annoying to the other clerks, was their incessant wrangling over the changes in prices, of the price of small peas, of the price of mackerel, of materials, the umbrellas, coats, hats, canes and gloves of their colleagues. They boasted emulatingly of new discoveries by which neither profited. Chazelle collected the prospectuses of the book-stores, advertisements in lithograph or drawings; but he never subscribed to anything. Paulmier, Chazelle's colleague at talking nonsense, passed his time by saying that if he had such and such a fortune he would treat himself to so and so. One day Paulmier called on the famous Dauriat to compliment him on having induced the book-sellers to produce some books in satin, with printed covers, begging him to persevere in this direction of improvement, while Paulmier himself did not possess a book! Chazelle's household was tyrannized over by his wife,—although he wished to appear independent,—and furnished Paulmier endless subject for ridicule; while Paulmier, a bachelor often half-starved like Vimeux, presented Chazelle with a fruitful source of ridicule, by his threadbare clothes and his disguised poverty. Chazelle and Paulmier were acquiring a paunch; that of Chazelle was round, small, pointed, and had, according to Bixiou's saying, the impertinence of always entering first; Paulmier's stomach swayed from right to left; Bixiou made

them get measured once every three months. Both these men were between thirty and forty years of age, both were silly enough; doing nothing outside the office, they presented the type of the pure-blood clerk, stupefied by red tape, by long association with the offices. Chazelle often went to sleep while working; and his pen, which he always held in his hand, marked little dots which registered his breathing. Paulmier attributed this sleepiness to the exigences of married life. In reply to this jest, Chazelle accused Paulmier of drinking herb tea four months out of the twelve every year, and told him he would die for love of a grisette. Paulmier demonstrated then that Chazelle should mark on an almanac the days when Madame Chazelle found him in good humor. These two clerks, by dint of washing their soiled linen by reproaching each other on account of the most minute details of their private lives, obtained the disrepute they merited.

"Do you take me for a Chazelle?" was a word which was sufficient to end a tiresome, annoying discussion.

Monsieur Poiret, Jr., called junior to distinguish him from his brother, Poiret the elder, who had retired to the Vauquer house, where Poiret, Jr., sometimes dined, who intended also to end his days there—had been in the service thirty years. Nature is not so invariable in her revolutions as this poor man was in the acts of his life; he always put his things in the same place, placed his pen on the same rack, sat in his place at the same hour, warmed

himself at the stove at a certain moment, for his only vanity consisted in carrying a watch which kept perfect time; this he regulated every day as he walked by the City Hall, before which he passed, as he lived in Rue du Martroi. From six to eight o'clock every morning he kept the books of a large business house which dealt in novelties, situated in the Rue Saint-Antoine, and from six to eight o'clock in the evening, those of Camusot of Rue des Bourdonnais. By this means he gained three thousand francs a year, including his official salary. In a few months more it would be time for him to retire on a pension, and so he showed the greatest indifference about the intrigues in the offices. Like his brother, whose withdrawal from service had been to him a great blow, he would no doubt perceptibly fail in health when he could no longer go from Rue du Martroi to the ministry, seat himself in his chair and get through with his work. He had been assigned the duty of collecting the journal for which the bureau subscribed, and that of the *Moniteur*. He became a fanatic about this collection; if any clerk lost a number,—took it away and did not return it,—Poiret, Jr., felt himself called upon to leave, went immediately to the office of the journal, reclaimed the missing number and returned enthusiastic over the politeness of the cashier. He had always had business with an agreeable fellow, and according to his account, journalists were decidedly delightful people who were little known. A man of middle height, Poiret had very dull eyes,

a feeble glance without warmth, leather-like skin, wrinkled and of a grayish hue speckled with bluish dots, a flat nose, and a mouth drawn inward, in which remained a few decayed teeth. Thuillier said that it was useless for Poiret to look at the mirror, as he no longer saw himself *dedans—in it* pronounced like *de dents, of teeth.* His thin long arms were terminated by large hands which were by no means white. His gray hair, flattened by the pressure of his hat, gave him the air of an ecclesiastic, a resemblance which was not very flattering to him, for he hated priests and the clergy generally, without being able to explain his religious views. This antipathy did not hinder him from being very much attached to the government, whatever it happened to be. He never buttoned his old green overcoat, even in extreme cold; he wore laced shoes only and black trousers. He bought his clothes from the same stores for thirty years. When his tailor died he asked leave of absence to go to his funeral, and pressed the hand of the son over the grave of his father, at the same time assuring him of his patronage. A friend of all tradesmen, he kept himself informed about their affairs, talked with them, listened to their grievances and paid them promptly. If he wrote to one of these *gentlemen* to change an order he had given, he took care to write in the most polite manner, placing *Monsieur* on a line by itself, dating and making a rough copy of the letter, which he kept in a box labeled: *My correspondence.* No life could be

more according to rule. Poiret kept all his paid bills, all his receipts, even the smallest, and his books of annual expenses were tied up in bundles and placed away by years; this he did ever since his entry into the ministry. He dined at the same restaurant—buying a season ticket—*The Sucking Calf*, in the Place du Châtelet; and sat there each day in the same seat;—for the waiters kept his place for him. He never gave to the *Cocon d'Or*, the famous silk house, five minutes, overtime; at half-past eight he arrived at the Café David, the most celebrated of the Quartier, and stayed there until eleven o'clock; he remained faithful to it as he did to *The Sucking Calf*, for thirty years, and called for a *bavaroise* at half-past ten. There he listened to political discussions, his arms crossed on his cane, and his chin resting in his right hand, without ever taking part in them himself. The woman at the desk—the only woman to whom he spoke with pleasure—was his confidante as to the little events of his life, for his place at the table was near the desk. He played dominoes—the only game he understood. When his partners did not come, he sometimes went to sleep, his back against the wainscoting, while holding a journal, the wooden file of which rested on the marble table. He maintained his interest in everything that went on in Paris, and devoted Sunday to examining new buildings. He questioned the old soldier whose business it was to prevent the public from entering the fenced-off enclosure, and was

worried at the delays which the buildings encountered in consequence of lack of material or of money, or of difficulties which the architect experienced. He was heard to say, "I have seen the Louvre emerge from its rubbish, I have seen the birth of the Place du Châtelet, the Quai aux Fleurs, the markets." He and his brother were born at Troyes; they were the sons of a tax-collector's clerk and had been sent to Paris to study in the Civil Service departments. Their mother was conspicuous for her disastrous misconduct, for the two brothers had the grief of hearing of her death at the hospital of Troyes, notwithstanding the many remittances of funds. These two men then swore not only never to marry, but they had a great antipathy to children, and were ill at ease in their presence; they feared them as some people fear the insane, and watched them with haggard eyes. Both of them had been overworked under the régime of Robert Lindet. At that time the administration had not treated them justly, but they thought themselves happy in having preserved their heads, and complained of this ingratitude only to each other, for they had *reached the highest.* When they played the trick on Phellion by causing his famous phrase to be reconstructed by Rabourdin, Poiret took Phellion aside in the hall as he went out and said to him:

"Believe truly, sir, that I have opposed, as far as was in my power, what has just taken place."

Since his arrival in Paris he had never left the

city. From that time he began a journal of his life in which he noted the principal events of the day. Du Bruel told him that Lord Byron also did so; and this resemblance filled Poiret with joy, and led him to buy the works of Lord Byron, translated by Chastopalli, of which he did not understand a word. He was often surprised in a melancholy attitude at the office, and he had the air of a profound thinker, while he was thinking of nothing. He had not become acquainted with even one of the tenants in the house where he lived, and he always kept by him the key to his domicile. On New Year's Day, he left his cards personally at the houses of all the clerks of the division, although he never made visits.

Bixiou took it into his head, one very hot day, to grease with lard the interior of an old hat which Poiret Jr.—he was fifty-two years old—had worn for nine years. Bixiou, who had never seen Poiret wear any other hat, dreamed of it; he saw it before him even when eating; he therefore resolved, in the interest of his digestion, to rid the office of this unsightly hat. Poiret Jr. went out about four o'clock. On going into the streets of Paris where the rays of the sun are reflected by the pavement and the walls produce tropical heat, he felt that his head was saturated, although he rarely perspired. *Feeling that he was either ill or about to become so,* he went home instead of going to *The Sucking Calf*, took his diary from his writing-desk and made the following entry:

"To-day, the third of July, 1823, was overtaken by a strange perspiration, which perhaps is the first symptom of malaria, a malady peculiar to Champagne. I am of the opinion that I had better consult Doctor Haudry. The illness commenced at the upper end of the Quai de l'Ecole."

Suddenly, when he took off his hat, he discovered that his perspiration was caused by something independent of his own person. He wiped his face, examined his hat, but could discover nothing, for he did not dare to take out the lining. All this he noted in his journal:

"Carried my hat to Sieur Tournan, hat-maker, Rue Saint-Martin, for the reason that I have a suspicion that there is some other cause for this perspiration, which was after all no perspiration, but the effect of something lately added or formerly done to my hat."

Monsieur Tournan immediately told his customer that it was owing to the presence of a greasy substance obtained by frying the fat of a hog or a sow. The next day Poiret came in wearing a hat which he had borrowed from Monsieur Tournan while waiting for his new one; but before retiring for the night he made this entry in his journal: "*It is asserted that my hat contained lard, or the fat of a pig.*" This inexplicable affair occupied Poiret's attention for two weeks. He could not imagine how this phenomenon had occurred. At the office he was entertained with accounts of the showers of toads, and other dog-day wonders, also that the head of Napoléon was found stamped in the

root of a young elm-tree, and a thousand eccentricities of natural history. Vimeux told him that one day his hat—Vimeux's—had stained his face black, and that hat-makers sold drugs. Poiret went several times to see Sieur Tournan, to post himself as to the process of manufacturing hats.

In Rabourdin's employ there was also a man who posed as courageous, who professed the opinions of the Left Centre, and rebelled against Baudoyer's tyrannies which he displayed toward the unhappy slaves in his office. This youth, named Fleury, foolishly subscribed to an "opposition" sheet, wore a gray hat with a broad brim, red band on his blue trousers, a blue vest with gilt buttons, and an overcoat which crossed over his chest like that of a quartermaster of gendarmerie. Though unyielding in his opinions, he nevertheless remained in the office; but he predicted a fatal end to the government, if it still persisted in upholding religion. He avowed his sympathy for Napoléon, now that the death of that great man had caused the laws against the partisans of the usurper to become obsolete. Fleury, ex-captain in a line-regiment under the Emperor, was a tall, handsome, dark man; he was also treasurer at the Cirque-Olympique. Bixiou never permitted himself to plague Fleury, for this rough trooper—who knew very well how to handle a pistol, and was an excellent fencer—appeared capable, should occasion offer, of resorting to extreme measures. An enthusiastic subscriber to *Victoires et Conquêtes,* Fleury refused to pay his

dues, though he kept the books, taking refuge in the fact that they exceeded the number proposed in the prospectus. He adored Monsieur Rabourdin, who had prevented him from being discharged. He was heard to say that if ever any misfortune should befall Monsieur Rabourdin, through anyone's fault, he would kill that person. Dutocq basely cringed to Fleury because he feared him. Fleury, crippled by debts, played many tricks on his creditors. Expert in legal affairs, he never signed promissory notes; and his salary was attached in the names of fictitious creditors, so that he could get almost all of it himself. Intimately connected with a supernumerary in the Porte-Saint-Martin, with whom his furniture was stored, he played écarté with a happy heart, was the life of receptions because of his talents, drank a glass of champagne at one draught without wetting his lips, and knew all Béranger's songs by heart. He was proud of his full, sonorous voice. His three great men were Napoléon, Bolivar and Béranger. Foy, Laffite and Casimir Delavigne he only esteemed. Fleury, you can readily imagine, was a man from the south who was destined to become the responsible editor of some liberal journal.

Desroys, the mysterious man of the division, did not come in collision with anyone; he talked but little and hid his private life so carefully that no one knew where he lived, who were his protectors or what means he had to live on. In trying to find the cause of Desroys' silence some thought him a

Carbonaro, others an Orléaniste, others a spy, and others again thought him a deep thinker. Desroys was merely the son of a member of the National Convention who had not voted for the death of the King. He was cold and reserved by temperament, he had judged the world and relied only on himself. Republican at heart, an admirer of Paul-Louis Courier, a friend of Michel Chrestien, he looked to time and to public intelligence to accomplish the triumph of his opinions in Europe. He also dreamed of the new Germany and the new Italy. His heart swelled with that stupid collective love called *Humanitarianism*, the eldest son of defunct Philanthropy, and which bears the same relation to the divine catholic charity as system does to art, or reasoning does to works. This conscientious puritan of liberty, this apostle of an impossible equality regretted that his poverty had forced him to serve the government, and he made exertions to try to find a position in the office of some forwarding house. Tall, thin, lanky, and serious like a man who expects to lay down his life some day for the great cause, he lived on a page of Volney, studied Saint-Just and occupied himself in a vindication of Robespierre, considered as the successor of Jesus Christ.

The last of these people who merit a sketch is the little La Billardière. Having unfortunately lost his mother, and being protected by the minister, and exempt from the tyrannies of the *Place-Baudoyer*, received in all the ministerial

salons, he was hated by everyone because of his impertinence and his conceit. The chiefs were polite to him, but the clerks placed him beyond their companionship by the exaggerated politeness they showed him. Bellâtre of twenty-two years, tall and slender, with the manners of an Englishman, insulting the offices by his dandified dress; he was curled, perfumed, and wore fashionable collars, yellow gloves, hats, the lining of which was always new; using an eye-glass, breakfasting at the Palais-Royal, having the manners of a polished dunce who understood the art of imitating, Benjamin de la Billardière thought himself a charming young man, and possessed all the vices of swell society without its graces. Sure of being something, it occurred to him that he would write a book so that he might obtain the Cross as an author and impute it to his administrative talent. He flattered Bixiou with the intention of making use of him, but had not dared to confide his project to him. This noble heart waited impatiently for the death of his father so that he might succeed to the title of Baron, recently granted; he wrote on his cards, *Le Chevalier de la Billardière,* and had his office hung with his coat-of-arms framed—a field azure with three stars, and two swords crossed obliquely on a field sable, with this device: "À TOUJOURS FIDELE!"—Having a mania for conversing about heraldry, he asked the young Vicomte de Portenduère why his arms were so crowded, and brought forth this happy reply, "I did not have them made." He spoke

of his devotion to monarchy and of the kindness the Dauphine had shown him. On good terms with des Lupeaulx, he often breakfasted with him, and considered him his friend. Bixiou posed as his mentor, and hoped to rid the division and France of this young coxcomb by thrusting him into excesses, and he openly avowed his intention.

Such were the principal characters in La Billardière's division, where were still other clerks whose manners or faces more or less resembled those already described. In Baudoyer's office were found clerks with bald heads, chilly, enveloped in flannel, living on the fifth floor, cultivating flowers there, having thorn canes, threadbare coats, and always carrying an umbrella. These people who hold the middle rank between the happy porters and the uncomfortable workmen; too far from the centre of the administration to dream of any advancement whatever, represent the pawns on the Civil Service chess-board. Happy to be on guard so that they did not have to go to the office, ready to do anything for a fee, how they exist is a problem even for those who employ them, and is an accusation against the state which certainly makes these people unfortunate by accepting their services for so little. Looking at these strange faces it is difficult to decide if these mammals with pens have become stupid from their routine life, or whether, being born somewhat stupid, they pursue this vocation. Perhaps the fault is equally divided between nature and the government. Someone has

said that "country-people are unconsciously influenced by atmospheric changes and outward conditions. Identified somewhat with the nature in the midst of which they live, they are insensibly imbued with the ideas and sentiments which it inspires and which they reproduce in their actions and in their expressions, according to their temperaments and individual characters. Formed thus and fashioned long ago by the objects by which they are continually surrounded, they are the most interesting as well as the truest book for whomsoever feels himself drawn toward this part of physiology, so little understood and at the same time so prolific, which explains the connection which the moral being has with the external agents of nature." But nature, to a government clerk, is the office; his horizon is bounded on all sides by green boxes; for him, atmospheric changes are represented by the air of the corridors, the masculine exhalations contained in rooms without ventilators, the odor of papers and pens; his soil is a tiled pavement or a parquet floor strewn with curious rubbish, moistened by the watering-pot of the office-boy; his sky is the ceiling towards which he looks when he yawns; and his element is dust. The observations previously made about country-people are equally appropriate to the government clerks who are *identified* with the surroundings in the midst of which they live. If several distinguished doctors dread the influence of this nature, at the same time savage and civilized, on the moral beings who spend their

days in those dreadful compartments called offices, where but little sunlight can penetrate, where thoughts are bridled to occupations like horses who turn a crank—who yawn horribly and die soon—Rabourdin, therefore, was perfectly right in his efforts to thin out the clerks by giving those who remain more salary and heavier work. People never tire when doing great things. Besides, the government offices as they are now constituted—during the nine hours their clerks owe to the service,—waste four of them in conversation, as we shall see, in telling stories, in disputes, and above all, in intrigues. One must be very familiar with the life in these offices to realize to what point this belittling life resembles that in colleges; but wherever men live collectively, this similitude is striking: in the regiment, in the tribunals, you will find the college on a more or less extended scale. All these clerks, sitting together eight hours a day in these offices, looked upon their work as a kind of class in which they had a task to do, where the chiefs replaced the principal of the school, where the gratuities were like prizes for good conduct given out to protégés—a place where they teased each other, hated each other, and where, notwithstanding, there existed a sort of comradeship, but colder than that in a regiment, which itself is not so strong as that in colleges. As a man advances in life his egotism develops and relaxes the secondary bonds of affection. Besides, is not the government office a little world in itself,

with its oddities, its friendships, its hatreds, its envy and its cupidity, its steady onward march in spite of obstacles, its frivolous conversation which gives so many wounds, and its incessant espionage?

*

Just now the division of the Baron de la Billardière was a prey to an extraordinary excitement, well justified by the event which was just going to take place, for chiefs of divisions do not die every day, and there are no insurance companies in which the chances of life and death are calculated more accurately than in government offices. Self-interest there stifles all pity, as it does in children; but to this the clerks add hypocrisy.

Toward eight o'clock the clerks of Baudoyer's office arrived at their post, while those in Rabourdin's office rarely appeared before nine, which did not prevent them from working much more rapidly for Rabourdin than for Baudoyer. Dutocq had grave reasons for arriving so early. The evening before he had furtively entered the office where Sébastien was at work; he had surprised him while doing copying-work for Rabourdin; he remained hidden, and saw Sébastien go away without any papers. Certain then of finding this very voluminous memorandum and the copy hidden in some corner, he turned over all the boxes one after the other, and at last he found this terrible list. He hastened to the head of an autograph-printing house, and had two copies of this work made by means of a copying-press, and in this way he possessed even the very writing of Rabourdin. In

order to avoid suspicion, he had hastened to replace the memorandum in the box, by arriving the first one at the office. Sébastien, who was kept in Rue Duphot until midnight, was, notwithstanding his diligence, outstripped by hatred. Hatred lived in Rue Saint-Louis-Saint-Honoré whereas devotion lived in Rue du Roi-Doré, in the Marais. This slight delay pressed heavily on the entire life of Rabourdin. Sébastien hurried to open his box, and there found his unfinished copy and the memorandum itself, and locked them in his chief's desk. Toward the end of December, often, little light penetrates through the offices in the morning, in fact there are some in which lamps are burned until ten o'clock. Sébastien, therefore, did not notice the pressure of the copying-stone machine on the paper. But when Rabourdin examined his memorandum, about half-past nine, he perceived much better the effect produced by the autographic process, because he was much occupied in testing whether these autographic presses could do the work of copying-clerks.

The chief of the office sat in his arm-chair, took the tongs and set about to arrange the fire, being greatly absorbed by his reflections; then, curious to know in whose hands his secret was held, he sent for Sébastien.

"Has anyone come to the office before you?" he asked him.

"Yes," said Sébastien, "Monsieur Dutocq."

"Well, he was punctual. Send Antoine to me."

Too noble to wound Sébastien needlessly by

reproaching him with a misfortune which had already taken place, Rabourdin said no more to him. Antoine came; Rabourdin asked him if some clerks had not remained at the office yesterday after four o'clock; the man mentioned that Dutocq had worked later than Monsieur de la Roche. Rabourdin dismissed him by a nod of the head, and continued his reflections.

"Twice I have prevented his discharge," he said, "and this is my reward!"

This morning was to the chief of the office like the solemn moment when great captains decide a battle in which all chances are weighed. Being more familiar than anyone else with the spirit of the Civil Service, he knew that pardon would be as difficult to obtain there for what resembles espionage or tale-bearing as at college, in the penitentiary, or in the army. A man who informs against his comrades is disgraced, ruined, condemned; in such a case the ministers of state would disavow their own agents. Under such circumstances an official ought to send in his resignation and leave Paris, for his honor is forever stained, explanations are useless, no one will ask for or listen to them. A minister who is up to this same game is thought to be a great man, for it is his business to choose men; but a simple clerk who should do the same thing would pass for a spy, whatever his motives. While fully aware of the emptiness of these foolish opinions, Rabourdin felt their great power, and he also felt that they were crushing

him. More surprised than cast down, he sought for the best course to follow under the circumstances, and so he took no note of the excitement in the offices which was occasioned by the death of de la Billardière; he only learned about it through the little de la Brière, who knew how to appreciate the good qualities of the head of the office.

Consequently, Bixiou was in Baudoyer's office, about ten o'clock, relating the history of the last moments of the director of the division to Minard, Desroys and Monsieur Godard, whom he had called from his private office, and also to Dutocq, who had hastened to Baudoyer's office with a double motive. Colleville and Chazelle were absent.

BIXIOU—standing in front of the stove, turning up the sole of one boot at a time to dry it at the opening.

"This morning at half-past seven, I went to ask after our worthy and respectable director, knight of the Order of Christ, etc., etc. Ah! *mon Dieu*, yes, gentlemen, as late as yesterday the baron had twenty *et cæteras* to his name, while to-day he is nothing, not even a government clerk. I asked for all the details of his last night on earth. His nurse, who had no thought of his dying, told me that this morning, at five o'clock, he became anxious about the royal family. He wished to have read to him the names of those of us who had called to inquire after him. At last he said, 'Fill my snuff-box, give me the paper, bring me my spectacles, change my ribbon of the Legion of Honor—it is very much soiled.' You know he wore his decorations

in bed. He had then full consciousness, retained his mind, and also all his usual ideas. But, bah! ten minutes later the water rose higher, higher, higher toward the heart, and flooded his chest; he knew that he was dying when he felt the cysts burst. At this fatal moment, he gave proof of his powerful mind and great intelligence! Ah! we none of us have appreciated him! We used to laugh at him, we called him an old fogy, in fact, every name which could be applied to an old blockhead; is it not so, Monsieur Godard?"

GODARD.

"As for me, I always considered Monsieur de la Billardière's talents to be greater than those of other men."

BIXIOU.

"You understood each other."

GODARD.

"After all he was not a bad sort of man, he never did anyone any harm."

BIXIOU.

"In order to do wrong, one must do something, and he did nothing. If it was not you who thought him altogether incapable, it must then have been Minard."

MINARD—shrugging his shoulders.

"I?"

BIXIOU.

"Well, then, was it you, Dutocq?—(Dutocq made a vehement gesture of denial.)—Good! then, it was no one!

Every one here then thought he had the head of a Hercules! Ah! yes, you were right; to the last he was a man of ability, of talent, of thought, like the great man that he was."

DESROYS—impatiently.

"*Mon Dieu*, what great thing has he done? He made his confession!"

BIXIOU.

"Yes, sir, and he wished to receive the Last Sacrament. But, do you know what he did in order to receive it? He put on his uniform of Gentleman-in-Ordinary of the Bed-Chamber, all his orders, and had himself powdered; and his queue—that poor queue!—tied with a new ribbon. Now, I say only a man of great character would order his queue dressed in his dying moments. We are eight of us here, and not one of us would have done likewise. This is not all; he said—for you know all celebrated men when dying make a last *speech*—he said—How did he say it? Ah! 'I must attire myself to meet the King of Heaven, I who have been so often dressed in my best to pay my addresses to the king in this world!' In this manner Monsieur de la Billardière passed his last moments; he wished to try to justify this saying of Pythagoras: 'Men are not well known until after their death.'"

COLLEVILLE—entering.

"Gentlemen, I bring you great news."

ALL.

"We know it already."

COLLEVILLE.

"I defy you to know it! I have been looking for it ever since the accession of His Majesty to the thrones of France and Navarre. Last night I succeeded, but after so much trouble, that Madame Colleville asked me what was the matter and why I was so worried."

DUTOCQ.

"Do you think any one has time to occupy himself with your anagrams, when the worthy Monsieur de la Billardière has just died?"—

COLLEVILLE.

"That is one of Bixiou's speeches! I have just come from Monsieur de la Billardière's house; he was then alive, but his death was expected at any moment—(Godard, perceiving the hoax, is annoyed and goes to his office)—Gentlemen, you will never guess the events which are revealed by the anagram of this sacramental phrase—(he shows a paper and reads aloud)—*Charles Dix, par la grace de Dieu, roi de France et de Navarre.*"

GODARD—returning.

"Tell us at once, and do not tantalize these gentlemen."

COLLEVILLE—In a triumphant manner unrolling the hidden part of his sheet of paper.

A H. V. il cedera,
De S. C. l. d. partira,
En nauf errera.
Decede à Gorix.

"Every letter is there—(he then repeats it)—À Henri Cinq il cédera—(sa couronne)—(to Henry V. he will give up—his crown); de Saint-Cloud partira (from Saint-Cloud he will depart); en nauf (in shipwreck, in a skiff, war-ship, sloop of war, corvette, anything you wish, for it is an old French word) errera (he will wander—)"

DUTOCQ.

"What a tissue of absurdities! How would you like the king to cede the crown to Henry V., who, according to your hypothesis, would be his grandson, when the dauphin is living? Thus you prophesy the death of the dauphin."

BIXIOU.

"What is Gorix? the name of a cat?"

COLLEVILLE—provoked.

"It is the lapidarial abbreviation of the name of a town, my dear friend; I found it in Malte-Brun: Goritz is in Latin *Gorixia* and it is situated in Bohemia or in Hungary, or perhaps in Austria—"

BIXIOU.

"Tyrol, the Basque provinces, or South America. You should set it to music and play it on the clarionet."

GODARD—shrugging his shoulders and departing.

'What nonsense!"

COLLEVILLE.

"Nonsense, nonsense! I truly wish that you

would take the trouble to study fatalism, the religion of the Emperor Napoléon."

GODARD—offended at Colleville's tone.

"Monsieur Colleville, Bonaparte may be called *Emperor* by historians, but it is not necessary to recognize him as such in the government offices."

BIXIOU—smiling.

"Look for an anagram in this, my dear friend! Hold! in the matter of anagrams I like your wife's better, because it is easier to make.—(In a low voice)—Flavie should have—in her leisure moments—procured the position of chief of the office for you if only to preserve you from the nonsense of a Godard!"—

DUTOCQ—coming to Godard's rescue.

"If there were no stupidities you would lose your place, for you prophesy events which would be unpleasant to the king; all good royalists should presume that he has had enough trouble, having been twice banished from his country."

COLLEVILLE.

"If I should be deprived of my place, François Keller will give your minister a good shaking-up. (Deep silence.) I tell you, Master Dutocq, that all known anagrams have been fulfilled. Listen, you! Well, you do not marry, for in your name is the word *coqu!*"

BIXIOU.

"D. t. stands then for *de-testable.*"

DUTOCQ—without appearing angry.

"I much prefer that this word should remain only in my name."

PAULMIER—whispering to Desroys.

"A hoax, Monsieur Colleville."

DUTOCQ—to Colleville.

"Have you made the anagram of *Xavier Rabourdin, chef de bureau?*"

COLLEVILLE.

"Zounds!"

BIXIOU—mending his

"What did you find?"

COLLEVILLE.

"It is as follows: *D'abord rêva bureaux, E-u*—do you catch the meaning?—ET IL EUT! *E-u fin riche;* which means that after first belonging to the administration, he will remain there so that he can make his fortune in other directions. (Repeating.) *D'abord rêva bureaux, E-u fin riche.*"

DUTOCQ.

"That is at least singular."

BIXIOU.

"And *Isidore Baudoyer?*"

COLLEVILLE—mysteriously.

"I do not wish to tell that to anyone but Thuillier."

BIXIOU.

"Bet me a breakfast that I can tell it to you!"

COLLEVILLE.

"I will pay for it if you find out."

BIXIOU.

"You will treat me then, but do not regret it; two geniuses like you and me can always amuse ourselves in each other's company!—*Isidore Baudoyer* makes *Ris d'aboyeur d'oie!*"

COLLEVILLE—struck with astonishment.

"You have stolen it from me!"

BIXIOU—ceremoniously.

"Monsieur de Colleville, do me the honor of believing that I have a sufficient supply of nonsense to prevent me from stealing that of my neighbor."

BAUDOYER—entering, a bundle of papers in his hand.

"Gentlemen, I pray you, speak a little louder; you place the office in very good repute before the administration. The worthy Monsieur Clergeot, who did me the honor of coming in to ask me a question, heard your conversation."—(He passed by Monsieur Godard's desk.)

BIXIOU—in a whisper.

"The growler is very gentle this morning, we are about to have a change of weather."

DUTOCQ—in a low voice to Bixiou.

"I have something to tell you."

BIXIOU—touching Dutocq's vest.

"You wear a pretty vest which has doubtless cost you next to nothing. Is that the secret?"

DUTOCQ.

"What did you say, almost nothing? I never paid such a high price for anything. That is worth six francs a yard at the large store in Rue de la Paix—a beautiful heavy material, which is very suitable for deep mourning."

BIXIOU.

"You are a judge of engravings, but you are ignorant of the laws of etiquette. One cannot be universally talented. Silk is not admissible in deep mourning. For this reason I wear wool only. Monsieur Rabourdin, Monsieur Clergeot, and the minister, all wear woolen clothing; every one in the Faubourg Saint-Germain wears wool. Minard is the only one who does not wear wool; he is afraid of being mistaken for a sheep, called *laniger* in bucolic Latin; under this pretext he dispenses with wearing mourning for Louis XVIII., that great law-maker, author of the Bill of Rights and a man of ability, a king who will always hold his place in history, as he has held it everywhere, for do you know the greatest characteristic of his life? No. Very well, on his second return, when receiving all the allied sovereigns, he took the lead in going to dinner."

PAULMIER—looking at Dutocq.

"I do not understand."

DUTOCQ—looking at Paulmier

"Neither do I."

BIXIOU.

"You do not understand? Ah, well! He did not consider himself at home. He was high-minded, great and epigrammatic. The sovereigns understood it no better than you do, even when they put their heads together to try to comprehend it; it is true that they were almost all strangers."—(Baudoyer, during this conversation, was in the corner of the fireplace in the office of his deputy-chief and they both spoke in a low voice.)

BAUDOYER.

"Yes, the worthy man is now dying. The two ministers are there to watch his last moments; my father-in-law has just been told of the event. If you would render me a signal service you may take a cab and inform Madame Baudoyer, for Monsieur Saillard cannot leave his desk, and I, I dare not leave the office alone. Place yourself at her service; I think she has her own views and might now wish to take some action in the matter."—(The two functionaries go out together.)

GODARD.

"Monsieur Bixiou, I am about to leave the office for the day; take my place."

BAUDOYER—to Bixiou, with a kindly manner.

"You would consult me should there be occasion."

BIXIOU.

"The truth is, La Billardière is dead."

DUTOCQ—whispering in Bixiou's ear.

"Come outside with me."—(Bixiou and Dutocq step into the corridor and gaze ominously at each other.)

DUTOCQ—whispering in Bixiou's ear.

"Listen. Now is the time to talk together about our promotion. What would you say if you should become chief assistant and I head-clerk?"

BIXIOU—shrugging his shoulders.

"Come, no nonsense."

DUTOCQ.

"If Baudoyer should be nominated, Rabourdin would not remain; he would send in his resignation. Between ourselves, Baudoyer is so incapable, that if Du Bruel and you do not help him he will be dismissed in two months. If my calculations are correct we will have among us three vacant places."

BIXIOU.

"Three places right under our noses, which will be given to pot-bellies and to lackeys, to spies, to men belonging to the Society of Jesuits, to Colleville, whose wife has at last played the rôle which all pretty women end by playing—that of piety—"

DUTOCQ.

"As to you, my friend, if you wish for once in your life to employ your mind logically—(he stopped as though to study in Bixiou's face the effect of his speech.)—let us play our cards above board."

BIXIOU—calmly.

"Let us see your play!"

DUTOCQ.

"As for me, I do not wish any other position than that of deputy-chief. I know myself; I know that

I have not, like you, the means of becoming chief. Du Bruel may become director, you may be his chief clerk; he may leave you his place when he shall have laid up his hoard, and I, I shall slide easily through under your protection, until I am retired."

BIXIOU.

"How shrewd! But by what means do you expect to succeed in accomplishing an undertaking where it will be necessary to force the hand of the minister, and to eject a man of talent? Between ourselves, Rabourdin is the only competent man in the division, and perhaps in the ministry. But there is talk of putting in his place that square of foolishness, that cube of silliness, *la Place-Baudoyer!*"

DUTOCQ—with an important air.

"My friend, I can arouse all the officials against Rabourdin! You know how much Fleury cares for him? Very well, Fleury will despise him."

BIXIOU.

"To be despised by Fleury!"

DUTOCQ.

"No one will remain true to Rabourdin; the clerks *en masse* will bring their grievances to the minister, and not only in our division but in Clergeot's division, Bois-Levant's division, and that of other ministries."

BIXIOU.

"Forward, cavalry, infantry, artillery and sailors

of the guard! You rave, my boy! And I, what part am I to play in this?"

DUTOCQ.

'Make a biting caricature, a drawing of a man being killed!"

BIXIOU.

"Will you pay for it?"

DUTOCQ.

"A hundred francs."

BIXIOU—to himself.

"There is something—"

DUTOCQ—continuing.

"You must represent Rabourdin dressed as a butcher, but make the likeness to him striking; hunt for analogies between an office and a kitchen, place a skewer in his hand, draw portraits of the principal clerks of the ministry as fowls shut up in an immense cage over which must be written: *Civil Service Executions,* and make him in the act of cutting their throats one by one. You can have geese, ducks with human heads, vague likenesses, you understand! Rabourdin will be represented holding a fowl in his hand—Baudoyer, for example, made to resemble a turkey—"

BIXIOU.

"*Ris d'aboyeur d'oie!*—(he looks long at Dutocq.)—Did you discover that, you?"

DUTOCQ.

"Yes, I, myself."

BIXIOU—speaking to himself.

"Do these violent feelings lead to the same results as talent?—(to Dutocq).—My dear fellow, I will do it.—(Dutocq allowing an exclamation of joy to escape him.)—When—(stop)—I know what I can count on; for if you should not succeed I would lose my place, and I must make a living. You are a singularly *good fellow*, my dear colleague!"

DUTOCQ.

"Very well. Do not make the lithograph until the success of the undertaking is clear to you."

BIXIOU.

"Why do you not tell me everything at once?"

DUTOCQ.

"I must first feel the pulse of the office; we will speak of that anon."—(He departs.)

BIXIOU—alone in the corridor.

"This fried skate, for he bears a greater resemblance to a fish than to a bird; this Dutocq has a good idea, then; I do not know whence he has taken it. If *La Place-Baudoyer* succeed to La Billardière, it would be droll, more than droll; in that event we would gain much!—(He re-enters the office.)—Gentlemen, there will be remarkable changes! Papa la Billardière is really dead. No joking! word of honor! See, there is Godard off on an errand for our worthy chief, Baudoyer, presumed successor of the defunct—(Minard, Desroys, and Colleville raise their heads in astonishment, each one lays down his pen, Colleville blows his nose.)—We are all to be promoted! Colleville will at least be chief assistant.

Minard will perhaps be head-clerk, and why should it not be so? he is as stupid as I. Eh! Minard, if you should get two thousand five hundred, your little wife would be more than pleased, and you could then buy yourself boots!"

COLLEVILLE.

"But you are not yet in possession of these two thousand five hundred."

BIXIOU.

"Monsieur Dutocq gets that much in Rabourdin's office; why should I not have as much this year? Monsieur Baudoyer has had that amount."

COLLEVILLE.

"Through Monsieur Saillard's influence; no head-clerk in Clergeot's division receives a like amount."

PAULMIER.

"For example, has not Monsieur Cochin three thousand? He succeeded Monsieur Vavasseur, who was ten years under the Empire at four thousand. He was reduced to three thousand when the King returned, and at the time of his death received only two thousand five hundred. But Monsieur Cochin, through the influence of his brother, had his salary increased to three thousand."

COLLEVILLE.

"Monsieur Cochin signs his name, E. L. L. E. Cochin; his name is Emile-Louis-Lucien-Emmanuel, which, made into an anagram, gives COCHENILLE.

By the bye, he is interested in a druggist's establishment, Rue des Lombards, Maison Matifat, which made a fortune by successful speculations in that colonial product."

BIXIOU.

"Poor man, he has fooled a year with Florine!"

COLLEVILLE.

"Sometimes Cochin is present at our evenings at home, for he is a very expert performer on his violin.—(To Bixiou, who had not as yet begun his work)—You ought to come to our house to listen to a concert next Tuesday. A quintette by Reicha will be performed."

BIXIOU.

"Thank you, I prefer to read the score."

COLLEVILLE.

"Are you trying to joke by speaking thus? For an artist of your ability ought to love music."

BIXIOU.

"I will go, but for madame's sake alone."

BAUDOYER—returning.

"Monsieur Chazelle has not yet come; present my compliments to him, gentlemen."

BIXIOU—who put a hat in Chazelle's place when he heard Baudoyer approach.

"Pardon, sir, he has gone to Rabourdin's house to ask a question for you."

CHAZELLE—entering, his hat on his head, without perceiving Baudoyer.

"Father la Billardière is done for, gentlemen!

Rabourdin is chief of division, maître des requêtes! He has not stolen his promotion, that is sure—"

BAUDOYER—to Chazelle.

"You found that appointment in your second hat, sir, is it not so?—(He shows him the hat which is in his place.)—This is the third time within the month that you have arrived after nine o'clock; if you continue to be so late, you will make your way, but know in what manner.—(To Bixiou, who is reading the paper.)—My dear Monsieur Bixiou, do leave the paper to these gentlemen who are going to breakfast, and lay hold of the business of the day. I do not know what Monsieur Rabourdin wants with Gabriel; he keeps him, I believe, for his especial use; I have rung three times."—(Baudoyer and Bixiou retire into the inner office.)

CHAZELLE.

"Damned luck."

PAULMIER—delighting to annoy Chazelle.

"Were you not told downstairs that he was up here? Besides, could you not have looked around as you entered, and so have seen the hat at your place, and the elephant—"

COLLEVILLE—laughing.

"In the menagerie!"

PAULMIER.

"It is large enough to be seen."

CHAZELLE—in despair.

"Zounds! in return for the four francs seventy-five centimes which the government pays us for a

day's labor, I do not see that we ought to be slaves."

FLEURY—entering.

"Down with Baudoyer, hurrah for Rabourdin! That is the sentiment of the division."

CHAZELLE—exasperated.

"Baudoyer can dismiss me if he likes; I shall not be greatly grieved. In Paris there are a thousand ways of gaining five francs a day! One can earn that much at the Palais de Justice, copying briefs for lawyers.'

PAULMIER—continuing to tease Chazelle.

"You may say that, but a position is a position, and the plucky Colleville, who works like a convict outside of this office, and who could earn, if he were to lose his position here, more than his present salary by simply teaching music, even he prefers to keep his position. The deuce! One does not readily abandon one's expectations."

CHAZELLE—continuing his philippic.

'He may have expectations, but they are not for me! We have no chances of promotion? Zounds! Time was when there was no career more enticing than the administrative. So many men were in the army, that there were not enough for the government work. The toothless, those wounded in the hand, in the foot, or in bad health like Paulmier, and those who were near-sighted could obtain rapid

promotion. Families whose children thronged the colleges became fascinated with the brilliant career of a young man in spectacles, clad in a blue coat, whose buttonhole bouquet was brightened by a red ribbon, and who handled a million francs a month, by only staying a few hours in some government office, superintending some work, arriving there late and leaving early, having, like Lord Byron, hours of leisure, and writing novels, promenading in the Tuileries, with a rather consequential air, being seen everywhere, at the theatre, at the ball, *admitted to the best society*, dispensing his emoluments, thus returning to France everything that France had given him, returning even his services. In fact clerks were then, like Thuillier, cajoled by pretty women; they seemed to have ability, they were not overworked at the office. Empresses, queens, princesses, the wives of marshals in that happy time, had their caprices. All those fine ladies had the ambition of noble souls; they loved to give their protection. Thus one might fill a high position for twenty-five years; one might be auditor to the council of state, or maître des requêtes, and bring in his reports to the Emperor while amusing himself with his august family. Pleasure and work went on together. Everything was done quickly. But now, since the Chamber has insisted on a minute account of the expenses, and chapters marked: *The Staff!* we are of less account than soldiers. The lowest places are subject to a thousand chances, for there are a thousand sovereigns."

BIXIOU—re-entering.

"Chazelle is crazy. Where does he find a thousand sovereigns?—unless perchance in his pocket?"—

CHAZELLE.

'Let us count! There are four hundred at the end of Pont de la Concorde—so called because it leads to the scene of perpetual discord between the Right and Left of the Chamber; three hundred more at the end of Rue deTournon. The court,which ought to count for three hundred, is then obliged to have seven hundred times more power than the Emperor in order to appoint one of its protégés to any government position whatsoever!"

FLEURY.

'All this means, that in a country where three powers rule, you may bet a thousand to one that a clerk who relies solely upon his own merits will never be promoted."

BIXIOU—regarding Chazelle and Fleury by turns.

"Ah! my boys, you have yet to learn that in this age the worst state in life is the state of belonging to the State."

FLEURY.

"Because of the constitutional government."

COLLEVILLE.

"Gentlemen!—Do not talk politics."

BIXIOU.

"Fleury is right: serving the State to-day is not like serving the Prince, who knows when to punish

and when to reward! To-day, the State is every one. Now, everybody is not concerned in anybody. To serve every one is to serve no one. No one is interested in any one. A clerk lives between two negations. The world has no pity, has no respect, has no heart, no brains; it is an egotist, it forgets to-morrow the services rendered to it yesterday. In vain can you search within yourselves to find, like Monsieur Baudoyer, that from the tenderest infancy you had a talent for administration, that you are a Chateaubriand as regards reports, a Bossuet as regards circulars, a Canalis as regards memorials, or the genius of dispatches. There is a law of fatality against administrative genius,—the law of promotion through its means. This fatal method is based on the statistics of promotion and the statistics of mortality combined. It is certain that on entering whatever administration you choose, at eighteen years of age, you will have to wait until you are thirty years old before your salary is raised to eighteen hundred francs, while to obtain six thousand at fifty, Colleville's life proves to us that the ability of a woman, the support of several Peers of France, of several influential deputies, are of no effect. There is then no free and independent career in which, after twelve years' labor, a young man having gone through his school-course, having been vaccinated, freed from military duty and possessing all his faculties—without being a transcendent genius—there is no career in which he may not have amassed a capital of forty-five thousand

francs in centimes, representing a permanent income equal to our salaries, essentially precarious, for they are not even for life. In that time a grocer ought to make enough to ensure him ten thousand francs income, to make an assignment, or to preside over the Tribunal of Commerce. A painter can color over half a mile of canvas, and be decorated with the Legion of Honor, or pose as a neglected genius. A man of letters can become professor of some one subject; a journalist earn a hundred francs a thousand lines, by writing *feuilletons*, or find himself in Sainte-Pélagie for having written a brilliant pamphlet which displeased the Jesuits, which is of great benefit to him and will make him a politician at once. Even a lazy man, who has accomplished nothing—for some lazy people do really something—has debts and a widow who pays them. A priest has had time to become a bishop *in partibus*. A vaudevillist becomes owner, although he may never write, like Du Bruel, entire plays. A sober and intelligent lad who begins to discount with a very small capital, may like Mademoiselle Thuillier, then buy a share in a broker's business. Let us look lower down in the scale! a petty clerk will become notary, a rag-dealer will have an income of three thousand francs, the poorest workmen have been able to become manufacturers; while in the rotatory movement of this present civilization which mistakes perpetual division for progress, a man like Chazelle must dine at twenty-two sous a meal!—beat down his tailor and his boot-maker!—has debts!—is nothing! and

has become idiotic!—Come, gentlemen, a fine condition! Heh! Let us send in our resignations?—Fleury, Chazelle, fling yourselves into other employments, and in those pursuits become great men!—"

CHAZELLE—calmed down by Bixiou's words.

"Thank you."—(A general laugh.)

BIXIOU.

"You are wrong; in your place I should try to get ahead of the secretary-general."

CHAZELLE—uneasily.

"And what does he wish to say to me?"

BIXIOU.

"Odry would tell you, Chazelle, with more politeness than des Lupeaulx would, that the only place open for you is the Place de la Concorde."

PAULMIER—holding fast to the stove-pipe.

"Zounds! Baudoyer will show you no mercy; let us be off!"

FLEURY.

"Another example of Baudoyer's spite! Ah! what a queer fellow he is! Speak to me of Monsieur Rabourdin, now he is a man. He placed work on my table for me, which would take three days to accomplish in this office.—Ah! well, he expects that it will be done by four o'clock this evening. But he is not always at my heels to prevent me from talking to my friends."

BAUDOYER—appearing.

"Gentlemen, you will admit that if one has the

right to blame the Chamber or the progress of the administration, this right must be elsewhere than in the offices!—(He addressed himself to Fleury.)—Why are you here, sir?"

FLEURY—Insolently.

"To tell these gentlemen that there are some changes taking place! The secretary-general has sent for Du Bruel and for Dutocq also! Every one is asking who will be appointed."

BAUDOYER—re-entering.

"Here, sir, it is not your business; return to your own office, and do not disturb the routine of mine."

FLEURY—In the doorway.

"It would be a great injustice if Rabourdin should *gobble it up!* Faith! I would leave the ministry.—(He re-entered.)—Have you found your anagram, Papa Colleville?"

COLLEVILLE.

"Yes, here it is."

FLEURY—leaning over Colleville's desk.

"Famous! famous! Behold, what will surely happen if the government continues its method of hypocrisy.—(He made a sign to the clerks that Baudoyer was listening.)—If the government would frankly state its intention, without concealing anything, the Liberals would then see what was to be done. A government that turns against itself, its best friends, and men like those of the '*Débats*,' like Chateaubriand and Royer-Collard! is only to be pitied!"

COLLEVILLE—after having consulted his colleagues.

"Come, Fleury, you are a good fellow; but do not speak about politics here, you do not know what wrong you do us."

FLEURY—dryly.

"Adieu, gentlemen, I must hurry with my work. —(He returns and speaks to Bixiou in a low voice.)—It is said that Madame Colleville is connected with the Society of the Jesuits."

BIXIOU.

"Where?"

FLEURY—laughing aloud.

"You are too clever to be caught."

COLLEVILLE—anxiously.

"What are you saying?"

FLEURY.

"Last night our theatre made three thousand francs profit by the new play, although it is its fortieth representation. You ought to see it; the setting is superb."

*

At this moment des Lupeaulx was receiving Du Bruel in the secretary's office, where shortly after Dutocq joined them. Des Lupeaulx had learned of the death of Monsieur de la Billardière, through his valet, and wished to please the two ministers by publishing, that very evening, an obituary notice.

"Good-day, my dear Du Bruel," said the semi-minister to the head-clerk, as he entered, at the same time leaving him standing. "Do you know the news? La Billardière is dead; the two ministers were present when he received the Last Sacrament. The good man strongly recommended Rabourdin, saying that he would have died very unhappy, had he not known that the man who had so often acted as his substitute would be his successor. It seems that in the agony of death one confesses everything.—The minister agreed the more readily, because his intention, as well as that of the Council, was to reward Monsieur Rabourdin for his numerous services—Du Bruel nods—the council of state needs his experience. It is said that Monsieur de la Billardière will leave the division of his late father, and will pass to the Commission of Seals; that is the same as though the king were to make him a present of a hundred thousand francs, the position is like a notary's position and can be sold. This news will delight your division, for one can well

believe that Benjamin will be placed there. Du Bruel, we must get ten or a dozen lines together about this worthy man and put it among the Paris items. Their Excellencies will glance over them.—He reads the paper.—Do you know the particulars of the life of Papa la Billardière?"

Du Bruel made a gesture which implied ignorance on his part.

"No?" replied des Lupeaulx. "Oh, well! he was connected with the affairs of La Vendée, and he was one of the confidants of the late king. Like Comte de Fontaine, he never wished to make any terms with the First Consul. He had a little of the Chouan in him. He was born in Brittany, of a parliamentary family of so late a date that its title of nobility originated during the reign of Louis XVIII. How old was he? Never mind! Arrange it thus: *Loyalty which was never doubted—an enlightened religion*—the poor man had this peculiarity, that he would never put his foot inside of a church;—say that he was a *pious subject.* Bring in modestly that he sang the song of Siméon at the accession of Charles X. The Comte d'Artois thought very highly of La Billardière, for he co-operated unhappily in the affair of Quiberon and took everything on his own shoulders. Do you know that? La Billardière defended the King in a pamphlet in reply to an impudent account of the Revolution written by a journalist; you can then lay stress on his devotion. In short, weigh well your words, so that the other journals do not ridicule us, and bring me the article.

You were yesterday at Monsieur Rabourdin's house?"

"Yes, *Monseigneur*," said Du Bruel. "Ah pardon—"

"There is no harm in that," said des Lupeaulx, laughing.

"His wife is wonderfully beautiful," said Du Bruel; "there are not two such women in Paris; there are others as intellectual as she, but none as graciously intellectual. A woman may be more beautiful than Célestine; but it is difficult to find one with such a variety of beauty. Madame Rabourdin is much superior to Madame Colleville," said the vaudevillist in recalling des Lupeaulx' adventure. "Flavie owes what she is to her intercourse with men, while Madame Rabourdin depends upon herself alone; she knows everything. You cannot even tell a secret in Latin in her presence. If I had such a wife, I should believe it possible for me to succeed in every undertaking."

"You have more mind than an author ought to have," replied des Lupeaulx with a conceited air.

Then he turned around, espied Dutocq, and said to him:

"Ah! good-day, Dutocq; I have sent for you to ask you to lend me your Charlet, if it is complete; the countess knows nothing of Charlet."

Du Bruel retired.

"Why do you come when you are not called?" said des Lupeaulx harshly to Dutocq when they were alone. "Is the state in danger, that you come

to me at ten o'clock when I am just going to breakfast with His Excellency?"

"Perhaps, sir," said Dutocq, "if I had had the honor of seeing you this morning, you would doubtless not have eulogized Monsieur Rabourdin, after having read his opinion of you." Dutocq opened his coat, took a sheet of paper printed on the left-hand pages and placed it on des Lupeaulx's desk, having marked off the passage. Then he bolted the door, fearing interruption. The following is the paragraph which the secretary-general read while Dutocq was closing the door:

"MONSIEUR DES LUPEAULX. A government degrades itself by openly employing such a man, who is more especially qualified for the diplomatic police. He is fitted to successfully cope with political filibusters of other cabinets, and it would be a pity to employ him in the domestic police. He is superior to the ordinary spy, he understands a scheme, he would be capable of carrying on successfully an intrigue, and of skilfully covering his retreat."

Des Lupeaulx was succinctly analyzed in five or six paragraphs, the quintessence of the biographical portrait drawn at the beginning of this story. As the secretary-general read the first words he felt that he was being judged by a man stronger than himself; but he wished to reserve the right to examine into this memorandum which struck far and wide, without permitting a man like Dutocq to suspect his secret intentions. Des Lupeaulx thus assumed a calm and serious expression before the spy. The secretary-general, like lawyers, magistrates,

diplomats and all those who by profession are obliged to pry into the human heart, was astonished at nothing. Accustomed to treachery, to the wiles of hatred, and to snares, he was able to receive a wound in the back without changing the expression of his countenance.

"How did you get this article?"

Dutocq recounted his good luck. Des Lupeaulx listened to it without making the least sign of approbation, and so the spy tremblingly ended the narration which he had triumphantly commenced.

"Dutocq, you have placed your finger between the bark and the tree," said the secretary-general dryly. "If you do not wish to make very powerful enemies, guard most carefully this secret, which is a work of the utmost importance, and known to me."

Des Lupeaulx dismissed Dutocq with one of those glances more expressive than words.

"Ah! this scoundrel of a Rabourdin is concerned in this also!" said Dutocq, alarmed at finding a rival in his chief. "He then plays the major while I march on foot! I would not have thought it!"

To all his other motives of aversion to Rabourdin was added the jealousy of a member of the same profession against a colleague—one of the most powerful ingredients of hatred.

When des Lupeaulx was alone, he fell into a strange meditation. Of what power was Rabourdin the instrument. Should he—des Lupeaulx—make use of this singular document to ruin him, or should he keep it as a weapon to enable him to succeed with

the wife? This mystery was quite obscure to des Lupeaulx, who glanced with terror at the pages of this article where the men of his acquaintance were judged with extraordinary accuracy. He admired Rabourdin at the same time that he felt wounded to the quick by him. Breakfast-hour found des Lupeaulx still reading.

"Monseigneur will wait for you, if you do not go down," said the valet de chambre to the minister.

The minister was in the habit of breakfasting with his wife, his children and des Lupeaulx, without the presence of servants. The morning meal is the only moment of privacy which statesmen can snatch from the pressure of their overwhelming business. Yet notwithstanding the ingenious devices they resort to, to keep this hour for private conversation and unconstrained home life and affection, a great many important and unimportant people find means of infringing upon it. Often business will come up, as at this time, to interrupt their happiness.

"I thought Rabourdin was a man much superior to the ordinary government clerk; and see how, ten minutes after de la Billardière's death, he arranges to have a real theatre ticket sent to me by la Brière. Look," said the minister to des Lupeaulx, in giving him a paper which he was rolling between his fingers.

Too noble to dream of the disgraceful interpretation which the death of de la Billardière lent to his letter, Rabourdin had not withdrawn it from de la

Brière, after he had heard the news through him. Des Lupeaulx read as follows:

"MONSEIGNEUR, If twenty-three years of faithful service merits a favor, I entreat Your Excellency to give me an audience to-day if possible; it concerns an affair in which my honor is involved."

Then followed the usual formulas of respect.

"Poor man!" said des Lupeaulx, with a compassionate tone which confirmed the minister in his error, "we two are alone, bid him come. You have a meeting of the Council after the Chamber, and Your Excellency has to reply to-day to the Opposition, and so there is no other time when you can receive him."

Des Lupeaulx arose, called the attendant, spoke a few words to him, and then sat down at the table.

"I have summoned him to dessert," he said.

This minister, like all ministers of the Restoration, was a man past his youth. The charter granted by Louis XVIII. had this defect, that it tied the hands of the kings by forcing them to trust the destinies of the country to quadragenarians of the Chamber of Deputies, and to septuagenarians of the Peerage, so that it deprived them of the right to lay hold of a man of political talent wherever he might be found, notwithstanding his youth or his poverty-stricken condition. Napoléon alone could employ young men whom he chose, without being hampered by any consideration. Now, since the overthrow of that

mighty will, energetic action has deserted those in high positions. Inertia which succeeds energy is a contrast more dangerous in France than any other country. As a general thing, ministers who have been appointed when well on in years are all of medium ability, while ministers chosen when young have been an honor to European monarchies and to republics whose affairs they directed. The world still rings with the struggle between Pitt and Napoléon, two men who were engaged in politics at the age when the Henrys of Navarre, the Richelieus, the Mazarins, the Colberts, the Louvois, the d'Oranges, the Guises, the la Rovères, the Machiavellis, in fact, all the best known celebrated men, springing from a lowly sphere or born around thrones, commenced to govern the State. The Convention—a model of energy—was, in a great part, composed of young men; no sovereign can ever forget that it raised fourteen armies against Europe. Its policy, so fatal in the eyes of those who were in favor of absolute power, was, nevertheless, dictated by real monarchical principles; because it conducted itself like a great king. After ten or twelve years of parliamentary struggles, after having studied politics until worn out with the effort, this minister had become firmly supported by a party who looked upon him as their man of business. Happily for him, he was nearer sixty than fifty years of age; if he had still retained any youthful vigor, he would have been promptly undone. But, accustomed to thrust things aside, to beat a retreat, to return to the charge, he could allow

himself to be attacked in turn by his party, the opposition, the court, the clergy, by confronting them with the inertia of matter at the same time soft and firm; thus he profited by his misfortunes. Harassed by a thousand government questions, his mind—like that of an old lawyer who has pleaded in all sorts of cases—no longer retained that keenness which belongs to solitary minds, neither had he the promptitude of decision of people early accustomed to action, such as distinguishes young soldiers. How could it be otherwise? He had quibbled instead of judging, he had criticised effects without searching for their causes; above all, his head was full of a thousand reforms such as a political party thrusts upon its leader, a course that private interest brings to an orator supposed to have a future before him, a medley of schemes, and impracticable counsels. Far from coming to his work fresh, he was tired out with his marches and counter-marches. Afterward, on attaining a place at the height so eagerly sought for, he found that he was pierced by a thousand thorny bushes, that he had a thousand conflicting wills to conciliate. If the statesmen of the Restoration had been permitted to carry out their own ideas, their ability would doubtless have been less subject to criticism; but, though their wishes were overruled, their age saved them by hindering them from making the resistance which youth opposes to intrigues, both high and low, such as sometimes vanquished Richelieu, and to which, in a lower sphere, Rabourdin was to succumb. After the anxieties of their first

troubles, these men—less old than aged—have to endure anxieties inseparable from the ministry. Thus their eyes become weak at the time when they should be as clear-sighted as the eagle; their minds are weary when it is necessary for them to redouble their energy.

The minister in whom Rabourdin wished to confide was daily accustomed to listen to men of unquestionable superiority explain to him the most ingenious theories of government, applicable or inapplicable in regard to the affairs of France. These people, who had no idea of the difficulties of national politics, assailed this minister on his return from a parliamentary struggle, or in a contest with the secret follies of the court, or on the eve of a combat with the public spirit, or on the morrow of a diplomatic question which had divided the Council into three parties. Placed in this situation, a statesman naturally keeps a yawn ready for the first sentence referring to the better regulation of public affairs. At such times there was no dinner where the most audacious speculators, or shrewdest financiers and politicians did not—in the most serious conversation—reflect the opinions of the Bourse and the bank, the diplomatic secrets, and the plans which treated of European affairs. In des Lupeaulx, and his private secretary, the minister possessed, moreover, a petty Council which digested these opinions, so that they could control and analyze the interests which were expressed by so many clever men. In fact, his misfortune—which was common to all sexagenarian

ministers—was, that he shuffled with all difficulties; with journalism, which at this time it was deemed advisable to suppress noiselessly, instead of fighting openly; with the question of finance as well as the labor question; with the clergy as well as with the question of national wealth; with liberalism as well as with the Chamber. The minister, after having controlled the power for seven years, thought that he could dispose of all questions in like manner. It is so natural for one to endeavor to retain power by the same means by which it was attained, that no one dared to blame a method invented by people of moderate ability to conciliate minds of moderate capacity. The Restoration, as well as the Polish Revolution, proved to nations, as well as to princes, what a man was worth, and what happens to the country when the right man is wanting. The last and greatest fault of statesmen of the Restoration was their honesty during the struggle, in which their adversaries employed all the resources of political trickery, lies and calumnies, and who let loose upon them, through subversive means, the ignorant masses, accustomed only to comprehend revolt.

Rabourdin acknowledged all that to himself. But he had just decided to stake all in the hopes of winning everything, like a man who, weary of gambling, only allows himself one more stake. But chance had given him a sharper for his adversary, in the person of des Lupeaulx. Notwithstanding his sagacity, the chief of the office—Rabourdin—was wiser in the affairs of the administration than in

insight into parliamentary affairs, and so did not imagine the whole truth; he had no idea that the great work which filled his life would be viewed by the minister as a theory, and that it would be impossible for a statesman not to confound it with the innovators of the dessert, with the chatters of the chimney-corner.

At the moment when the minister, standing, was thinking of François Keller, instead of Rabourdin, and only remained because his wife offered him a bunch of grapes, the servant announced the chief of the bureau. Des Lupeaulx had counted on preoccupying the minister by means of the tales he had invented; thus seeing the statesman talking to his wife, he stood in front of Rabourdin and crushed him by his first sentence.

"His Excellency and I already know what you have on your mind, and you have nothing to fear," said des Lupeaulx, lowering his voice. Then raising his voice, he added, "neither from Dutocq nor from anyone else."

"Do not be uneasy, Rabourdin," said His Excellency, with kindness, at the same time making a movement as though to retire.

Rabourdin advanced respectfully, and so the minister could not avoid him.

"Will Your Excellency deign to allow me to say two words in private?" said Rabourdin, while looking at him with a mysterious glance.

The minister looked at the clock and went toward the window, followed by the poor chief.

"When can I have the honor of submitting this matter to Your Excellency? so that I can explain to you the new plan of administration which is connected with the article about which so much fault has been found—"

"A plan of administration!" said the minister, contracting his eyebrows and interrupting him. "If you have something of this kind to communicate to me, you had better wait for the day when we shall work together. For to-day I have the Council, and I ought to make a reply to the Chamber on the point which the Opposition raised yesterday, at the end of the session. Your day is next Wednesday; we could not work yesterday, for yesterday I was unable to attend to the business of the ministry. Political business has interfered with purely administrative affairs."

"I place my honor with confidence in the hands of Your Excellency," Rabourdin replied, seriously, "and I entreat you not to forget that you have not allowed me the time to explain at once about the stolen paper—"

"Fear nothing," said des Lupeaulx, placing himself between the minister and Rabourdin, whom he interrupted, "before a week shall have passed you will doubtless be nominated."

The minister laughed when he thought of des Lupeaulx's enthusiastic admiration for Madame Rabourdin, and he cast a side glance at his wife who smiled. Rabourdin, surprised at this by-play, sought its meaning, and so ceased to look at the minister

for a moment. His Excellency took advantage of it to make his escape.

"We will talk of that together," said des Lupeaulx, with whom the chief of the office, much to his surprise, found himself alone. "But do not be vexed with Dutocq. I will answer for him."

"Madame Rabourdin is a charming woman," said the minister's wife to the head of the office, for the sake of saying something.

The children gazed at Rabourdin with curiosity. Rabourdin had expected a serious interview, and he was like a great fish caught in the meshes of a light net; he struggled with himself.

"Madame la Comtesse is very good," he said.

"Shall I not have the pleasure of seeing her some Wednesday?" said the countess. "Bring her to my house; you will oblige me—"

"Madame Rabourdin receives on Wednesdays," said des Lupeaulx, who knew the insipidity of the official Wednesdays, "but as you show so much kindness toward her, you will soon give one of your private soirées—"

The minister's wife arose, annoyed.

"You are the master of ceremonies at my house," she said to des Lupeaulx.

These ambiguous words expressed the annoyance which des Lupeaulx caused her when he interfered with her private soirées, on which occasions she only admitted a select few. She left the room, as she bowed to Rabourdin. Des Lupeaulx and the head clerk were then left alone in the little parlor, where

the minister was accustomed to breakfast with his family. Des Lupeaulx was at that moment twisting in his hands the confidential letter which la Brière had carried to the minister, and Rabourdin recognized it.

"You do not know me thoroughly," said he, smiling to the chief of the office. "Friday evening we will come to a full understanding. Now I must receive callers. The minister puts the burden of everything on me because he is preparing to meet the Chamber. But I repeat to you, Rabourdin, fear nothing."

Rabourdin loitered slowly along the stairs, confused by the singular turn things had taken. He had expected Dutocq to denounce him, and he had not been mistaken. Des Lupeaulx had the very document which judged him so severely, at this moment in his hands, and des Lupeaulx was flattering his judge. It was totally bewildering! Men usually comprehend with difficulty deep intrigues, and Rabourdin felt that he was lost in this labyrinth, without having the power to guess the part played by the secretary-general.

"Either he has not read this article about himself, or he loves my wife!" Such were the two thoughts which occupied the mind of the chief as he traversed the court-yard, for the look which he surprised between Célestine and des Lupeaulx the previous evening came before him at this moment like a flash of lightning. During Rabourdin's absence his office had become the scene of the greatest excitement, for

the relations between the clerks and their chiefs in the ministry are so well regulated that the coming of a minister's messenger, sent to the office by His Excellency, and especially at the hour when the minister is not to be seen, causes great excitement. The coincidence of this extraordinary communication with the death of Monsieur de la Billardière gave, moreover, an undue importance to the fact which Monsieur Saillard learned through Monsieur Clergeot, and he had just conferred with his son-in-law thereon. Bixiou, who, at that moment, was engaged with his chief, left him conversing with his father-in-law and withdrew to Rabourdin's office, where all work was interrupted.

BIXIOU—entering.

"There is no great warmth about you, gentlemen! You have no idea what is going on down stairs. The *Virtuous Rabourdin* is done for; yes, replaced! There is a terrible scene taking place at the ministry."

DUTOCQ—looking at Bixiou.

"Is that true?"

BIXIOU.

"Who will be disturbed by that news? That is none of your business! You will become deputy-chief, and Du Bruel chief. Monsieur Baudoyer will be rewarded by the division."

FLEURY.

"I bet a hundred francs that Baudoyer will never be head of the division."

VIMEUX.

"I will join in the bet. Will you, Monsieur Poiret?"

POIRET.

"I have my pension in January."

BIXIOU.

"How is that? Then we shall never more see those laced shoes? and what will the ministry do without you? Who will take up my bet?"

DUTOCQ.

"I cannot bet, for I am too sure of the result. Monsieur Rabourdin is appointed. Monsieur de la Billardière, while on his death-bed, recommended him to the two ministers for the position, while he confessed that he had taken money for a position while Rabourdin had done all the work; for this he had scruples of conscience, and in order to calm him they promised, unless ordered otherwise by superior authority, to appoint Rabourdin."

BIXIOU.

"Gentlemen, are you all against me? Look, there are seven of you! For you will be in this bet, Monsieur Phellion. I bet a five hundred franc dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale* that Rabourdin has not obtained La Billardière's place. That will not cost you a hundred francs each, and as for me, I venture five hundred. I will play the stroke alone then. Shall we leave it thus? Do you agree, Du Bruel?"

PHELLION—laying down his pen.

"Sir, on what data do you found this uncertain proposition? for uncertain is the word. But I am wrong in using the word proposition; I meant to say *contract*. A wager constitutes a contract."

FLEURY.

"No, for the name contract can only be given to those agreements recognized by the Code, and the Code allows no suit for recovering a bet."

DUTOCQ.

"To reject it is the same as to recognize it."

BIXIOU.

"That is a rather strong expression, my little Dutocq."

POIRET.

"For example."

FLEURY.

"True. It is the same as by refusing to pay one's debts, one acknowledges them."

THUILLIER.

"You would make famous jurists."

POIRET.

"I am as curious as Monsieur Phellion to know what grounds Monsieur Bixiou has—"

BIXIOU—shouting across the office.

"Are you a bettor, Du Bruel?"

DU BRUEL—appearing.

"Zounds, gentlemen, I have something difficult to do, which consists in writing an obituary on the death of de la Billardière. Pray, do keep quiet; after I am through, you may laugh and bet."

THUILLIER.

"Joking or not! You infringe upon my puns!"

BIXIOU—entering Du Bruel's office.

"That is so, Du Bruel. It is very difficult to praise a good man; I would rather make his caricature!"

DU BRUEL.

"Will you help me, then, Bixiou?"

BIXIOU.

"I will with pleasure, although such articles are better done while eating."

DU BRUEL.

"We will dine together—Reads aloud.—'Religion and the monarchy are daily losing many of those who fought for them in revolutionary times.'"

BIXIOU.

"Bad. I would say: 'Death carries on its ravages particularly among the old defenders of the monarchy and the most faithful servants of the king, whose heart bleeds under so many blows.'—Du Bruel writes rapidly.—'Monsieur le Baron Flamet de la Billardière died this morning of dropsy of the chest, caused by an affection of the heart.' Do you see, it is not an uninteresting matter to show that there are hearts in these government offices. Shall I run in here a few lines

about the emotions of the Royalists during the Reign of Terror? Heh! that would not be amiss. But, no; the small newspapers would say that the emotions have their origin rather in the stomach than in the heart. Suppose we do not mention that. What have you written?"

DU BRUEL—reading aloud.

"Having been born of old parliamentary stock—"

BIXIOU.

"That is good! it is poetic, and stock is profoundly true."

DU BRUEL—continuing.

"In which devotion to the throne was hereditary, as well as the attachment to the faith of our fathers, Monsieur de la Billardière—"

BIXIOU.

"I would speak of him as *Monsieur le Baron*."

DU BRUEL.

"But he was not a baron in 1793."

BIXIOU.

"That does not make any difference. You know that under the Empire, Fouché, when telling an anecdote about the Convention, in which Robespierre was speaking to him, told it thus, 'Robespierre said to me: *Duc d'Otrante, you will go to the Hôtel de Ville!*' There is a precedent for you."

DU BRUEL.

"Let me take a note of that word! But let us

not write *le baron*, for I have reserved for the last the honors which were showered on him."

BIXIOU.

"Ah! well. That is dramatic, the whole outline of the article."

DU BRUEL.

"Do you see?—In nominating Monsieur de la Billardière baron, gentleman-in-ordinary—"

BIXIOU—aside.

"Very ordinary."

DU BRUEL—continuing.

"Of the bed-chamber, etc., the king rewarded at one time all the services rendered by the Provost, the severity of whose duties was disguised by the gentlemanly polish common to the Bourbons, and bravery of the Vendean hero, who had never bent the knee before the imperial idol. He leaves a son, who inherits his loyalty and his talents, etc."

BIXIOU.

"Is that not in too high a key, too highly colored? I should advise the toning down of this poetry: the imperial idol, to bend the knee! The devil! Writing vaudevilles has ruined your manner, and you are no longer capable of a solid prose style. I would put: '*He belonged to the small number of those who, etc.*' Simplify your expressions, for you are dealing with a simple man."

DU BRUEL.

"One word more on vaudeville. You would make your fortune at the theatre, Bixiou."

BIXIOU.

"What have you said about Quiberon?—He reads aloud.—That will not do! I would say: 'In a book recently published he took upon himself the responsibility of all the misfortunes connected with the expedition to Quiberon—thus showing a test of loyalty which shrank from no sacrifice.' That is clever, bright, and saves La Billardière from reproach."

DU BRUEL.

"At whose expense?"

BIXIOU—as solemnly as a priest mounting the pulpit.

"At Hoche's and Tallien's expense. You have no knowledge of history?"

DU BRUEL.

"No. I subscribed to the Baudouin collection, but I have never had time to open it; there is not one subject for a vaudeville in it."

PHELLION—at the door.

"We want to know everything, Monsieur Bixiou. Who can induce you to believe that the virtuous and worthy Monsieur Rabourdin—who has replaced de la Billardière during his nine months' illness, who is the oldest head clerk of the ministry, and whom the minister, on returning from Monsieur de la Billardière's house, sent his servant to summon—will not be appointed head of the division?"

BIXIOU.

"Papa Phellion, you understand geography?"

PHELLION—straightening.

"Sir, I flatter myself that I do."

BIXIOU.

"History?"

PHELLION—with a modest look.

"Perhaps."

BIXIOU—looking at him.

"The setting of your diamond is loose; it may fall. Well, yes, but you do not know the human heart. You know no more about it than you do about the environs of Paris."

POIRET—to Vimeux—in a low voice.

"The environs of Paris? I thought that he was talking about Monsieur Rabourdin."

BIXIOU.

"Is Rabourdin's entire office betting against me?"

ALL

"Yes."

BIXIOU.

"Du Bruel, are you in it?"

DU BRUEL.

"I should say so! It is for our interest that our chief be promoted. In that case, everyone in the office will step up a peg."

BIXIOU.

"I will bet. Let me tell you why. It will be difficult for you to understand, but let me tell it to

you all the same. It is but right that Monsieur Rabourdin should be appointed,—he glances at Dutocq—for in selecting him long service, talent, and integrity would be recognized, appreciated and rewarded. This appointment would be in the best interests of the administration.—Phellion, Poiret and Thuillier, listening without understanding a word, are like people trying to see clearly in the dark.—Very well. In consequence of his entire fitness for it and his merits, in recognizing how greatly such an act would be equitable and wise, I bet that he will not be appointed. Yes, it will be a case like that of the expeditions to Boulogne and to Russia, where genius united every element of success. It will fail, as will fail everything here below that seems just and good. I play the devil's games."

DU BRUEL.

"Who, then, will be appointed?"

BIXIOU.

"The more I think about Baudoyer, the more I think he unites in himself all the contrary qualities, and so he will be head of this division."

DUTOCQ—Pushed to his last extremity.

"But Monsieur des Lupeaulx, who sent for me to come here to borrow my Charlet, told me that Monsieur Rabourdin would be nominated, and that the little La Billardière would be made keeper of the seals."

BIXIOU.

"Appointed! appointed! The appointment will not be signed for ten days yet. The appointment

will date from the first day of the year. Look, see your chief in the court, and tell me if my *Virtuous-Rabourdin* has the air of a man in favor. One would think that he had been discharged!—Fleury rushes to the window.—Adieu, gentlemen. I am going to tell Monsieur Baudoyer that you have chosen Monsieur Rabourdin; that will anger him exceedingly, the holy man! Then I will tell him about our bet, so that he may take heart again. That is what we call in the theatre the event, is it not, Du Bruel? What does that matter to me? If I win, he will make me head clerk."—He goes out.

POIRET.

"Everyone says that this man is clever. Well, as for me, I can never understand a word he says —he goes on copying.—I listen to it, and I listen to it; I hear words without sense. He talks about the environs of Paris in the same breath with the human heart and—he lays down his pen and goes to the stove—says that he is playing the devil's game when speaking about the expeditions of Russia and Boulogne! One must first admit that the devil can play, and then know what game! I would first mention the game of dominoes."—He blows his nose.

FLEURY—Interrupting.

"It must be eleven o'clock, for Father Poiret blows his nose."

DU BRUEL.

"That must be so—already! I must hurry to the office."

POIRET.

"What was I saying?"

THUILLIER.

"*Domino* to the Seigneur; for the devil is in question, and he is a sovereign without any charter. But this aims more at the point than at the pun. That is a play on words. As for the rest, I cannot see the difference between a play on words and—"

Sébastien enters to gather up documents for signature and for correction.

VIMEUX.

"You here, fine young man? The time of your sorrows is ended; you will be appointed! Monsieur Rabourdin will be nominated. You were present last evening at Madame Rabourdin's soirée. Were you not delighted to be present! It is said that one always meets superb women there."

SÉBASTIEN.

"I do not know."

FLEURY.

"Are you blind?"

SÉBASTIEN.

"I do not like to look at what I cannot possess."

PHELLION—enchanted.

"Well said, young man."

VIMEUX.

"You pay great attention to Madame Rabourdin. The devil! She is a charming woman."

FLEURY.

"Bah! a very thin figure. I saw her in the Tuileries; I much prefer Percilliée, the head ballet girl, Castaing's victim."

PHELLION.

"But what has an actress to do with the wife of the chief of the office?"

DUTOCQ.

"They both play comedy."

FLEURY—regarding Dutocq sideways.

"The physical has nothing to do with the moral character, and if you mean, by that, that—"

DUTOCQ.

"Oh, I mean nothing."

FLEURY.

"Do you wish to know who will be head of the office?"

ALL.

"Tell us!"

FLEURY.

"It will be Colleville."

THUILLIER.

"Why?"

FLEURY.

"Madame Colleville has taken the short cut toward this position—the road through the sacristy—"

THUILLIER—dryly.

"I am such a dear friend of Colleville that I must

beg you, Monsieur Fleury, not to speak so lightly of his wife."

PHELLION.

"Never should women, who have no means of defending themselves, be the subject of our conversations—"

VIMEUX.

"All the more because Madame Colleville has not chosen to receive Fleury, he disparages her for the sake of revenge."

FLEURY.

"She did not wish to receive me on the same footing as she does Thuillier, but I go there—"

THUILLIER.

"When?—Where?—under her windows?"—

*

Although Fleury was dreaded in the office for his blustering, he accepted in silence Thuillier's last word. This resignation, which surprised the clerks, was caused by a note for two hundred francs, with a doubtful signature, which Thuillier was going to present to Mademoiselle Thuillier, his sister. After this skirmish, deep silence ensued. Every one worked from one to three o'clock. Du Bruel did not return.

About half-past three, the preparations for departure, the brushing of hats, the changing of coats, etc., went on simultaneously in all the offices of the ministry. This precious half-hour, spent in fussing about, shortened by so much the hours of labor. At this time the over-heated stove cools off, the odor peculiar to offices evaporates, and silence is restored. At four o'clock no one remains except the clerks proper, those who take their duty conscientiously. A minister may know who are the real workers in his ministry by going through the offices at precisely four o'clock—a kind of spying to which these dignified personages do not descend.

At this hour, in the courts, some chiefs meet to talk over their opinions in regard to the events of the day. Usually they were grouped in twos or threes, and they concluded their arguments in favor of Rabourdin, but old stagers, like Monsieur Clergeot, shook their heads, saying: *Habent sua sidera lites.*

Saillard and Baudoyer were politely avoided, for no one knew what to say to them about La Billardière's death, and every one knew that Baudoyer wanted the place, although it was not his due.

When the son-in-law and his father-in-law found that they had gone sufficiently far from the ministry, Saillard broke the silence, by saying: "That looks bad for you, my poor Baudoyer."

"I do not understand," said the chief, "of what Élisabeth was thinking when she sent Godard in such haste to procure the passport for Falleix. Godard tells me that she hired a post-chaise, by the advice of my uncle Mitral, and that even now Falleix is on his way to his own part of the country."

"Without doubt, some matter relative to our business," said Saillard.

"The most pressing business for us at this moment is to look out for Monsieur de la Billardière's place."

By this time they had arrived opposite the Palais-Royal in Rue Saint-Honoré. Dutocq saluted them, bowed and entered into conversation with them.

"Sir," said he to Baudoyer, "if I can be of any use to you in the circumstances in which you are placed, I am at your disposal, for I am not less devoted to you than Monsieur Godard."

"Such an assurance is at least consoling," said Baudoyer, "and merits the esteem of worthy people."

"If you will deign to use your influence to place me near to you as deputy chief, by selecting Bixiou for your chief, you will make the fortune of

two men capable of doing anything to further your advancement."

"You are making fun of us, sir?" said Saillard, staring stupidly."

"That is far from my thoughts," said Dutocq. "I have just come from the printing office of the journal where I went to carry—by request of the secretary-general—a notice on Monsieur de la Billardière. This article, which I then read, has given me the highest opinion of your talents. When the time comes to crush Rabourdin, I have it in my power to give a tremendous final blow, deign to remember that."

Dutocq disappeared.

"I'll be hanged if I understand a word of this," said the cashier, looking at Baudoyer, whose little eyes looked on with singular stupefaction. "We must buy the paper this evening."

When Saillard and his son-in-law entered their parlor on the ground-floor, they saw Madame Saillard, Élisabeth, Monsieur Gaudron and the curate of Saint-Paul in front of a large fire. The curate turned toward Monsieur Baudoyer, to whom his wife made a sign which he failed to comprehend.

"Sir," said the curate, "I have lost no time in coming to thank you for the magnificent gift with which you have adorned my poor church. I dared not run in debt in order to buy that beautiful monstrance worthy of a cathedral. You, who are one of our most pious and faithful parishioners, you, before all others, must have been struck with the bareness

of our high altar. In a few moments I will see Monseigneur, the coadjutor, and he will soon send you his thanks."

"I have done nothing yet—," said Baudoyer.

"Monsieur le Curé," replied his wife, cutting her husband's sentence short, "I will betray his whole secret. Monsieur Baudoyer hopes to complete his gift by giving you a dais for the coming Fête Dieu. But this acquisition depends somewhat on the state of our finances, and our finances depend on our advancement."

"God recompenses those who honor Him," said Monsieur Gaudron, as he withdrew with the curate.

"Why," said Saillard to Monsieur Gaudron and the curate, "why will you not do us the honor of dining with us pot-luck?"

"Stay, my dear vicar," said the curate to Gaudron.

"You know that I am engaged to dine with the curate of Saint-Roch, who will conduct the burial services for Monsieur de la Billardière to-morrow."

"Can the curate of Saint-Roch say a word for us?" said Baudoyer, whose wife pulled the skirts of his coat violently.

"Keep quiet, Baudoyer!" she said, while leading him into a corner so that she could whisper in his ear: "You have given a monstrance to the church, that is worth five thousand francs. I will explain everything to you."

The avaricious Baudoyer made a horrible grimace, and remained thoughtful during the entire dinner.

"Why, then, were you so agitated about Falleix's passport? Why do you meddle in the matter?" he added.

"It seems to me that Falleix's affairs somewhat concern us," Élisabeth replied dryly, throwing a glance at her husband to make him cognizant of the presence of Monsieur Gaudron, before whom he ought to be silent.

"Certainly," said Father Saillard, thinking of his interest in the business.

"I hope you arrived at the newspaper office in time," said Élisabeth to Monsieur Gaudron, as she gave him some soup.

"Yes, my dear Madame," the vicar replied, "as soon as the editor of the paper saw the short article written by the secretary of the Grand Almoner, he placed no further difficulty in its way. The little slip he took pains to place in the most desirable position. I should never have thought of that; but this young journalist has a very bright mind. The defenders of religion can fight against impiety without disadvantage, for there is a great deal of talent in the royalist press. I have every reason to think that success will crown your hopes. But remember, my dear Baudoyer, to look after Monsieur Colleville's interests; he is an object of great interest to His Eminence. I am requested to speak to you about him—"

"If I am head of the division, I will make him head of one of my offices, if it is desired!" said Baudoyer.

The answer to the enigma came after dinner was over. The ministerial newspaper bought by the porter contained, among the Paris news, the two following articles, called items:

"The Baron de la Billardière died this morning, after a long and painful illness. In him the King loses a devoted subject, and the Church one of her most pious children. Monsieur de la Billardière's last days have fitly crowned his noble life, which during tempestuous times was entirely consecrated to perilous missions, and has been of late years devoted to the most arduous duties of his position. Monsieur de la Billardière, was marshal of a department where his ability triumphed over the obstacles which were increased by the rebellion. He accepted the arduous position of director of a division, in which his brilliancy was not less useful than the French suavity of his manners, in arranging the grave affairs which were under consideration there. No rewards could have been better deserved than those by which the King, Louis XVIII., and His Majesty took pleasure in crowning his loyalty, which had never swerved under the usurper. This old family will revive in his son, who inherits the talents and devotion of the worthy man whose loss grieves so many friends. His Majesty has already, by a gracious word, given it to be understood that he considered Monsieur Benjamin de la Billardiere among the number of gentlemen-in-ordinary of the bed-chamber.

"The numerous friends who perchance have not been notified in regard to the funeral services, or those who have not received the notice in time, are informed that the obsequies will take place to-morrow at four o'clock in Saint-Roch Church. The memorial sermon will be delivered by the Abbé Fontanon."

"Monsieur Isidore Baudoyer, who represents one of the oldest bourgeois families of Paris, and who is head of an office in La Billardière's division, has of late recalled the old

traditions of piety which distinguished these great families, so jealous for the glory of religion and so friendly to its monuments. Saint-Paul's Church needed a monstrance, corresponding to the magnificence of that basilica, which was built by the Society of Jesus. Neither the vestry nor the curate were rich enough to decorate the altar. Monsieur Baudoyer has presented this parish with the monstrance which many people have admired at Monsieur Gohier's—the King's jeweler. Thanks to this pious man, who did not cavil at the enormous price, Saint-Paul's Church possesses, to-day, this master-piece of the goldsmith's art, the design for which was drawn by Monsieur de Sommervieux. We take pleasure in publishing a fact which proves how little effect the declamations of liberalism have on the minds of the Parisian bourgeoisie. At all times the highest class of the bourgeoisie have been royalists, and they always prove it when occasion offers."

"The price was five thousand francs," said the Abbé Gaudron, "but, as the money was paid down, the court jeweler reduced the amount."

"*Representing one of the oldest families of the Parisian bourgeoisie!*" said Saillard. "It is printed, and in the official newspaper, too!"

"Dear Monsieur Gaudron, do aid my father to compose a little speech to slip into the ear of the countess when he carries her the monthly stipend, a sentence which shall comprise everything. I will leave you. I must go out with my Uncle Mitral. Would you believe that it has been impossible for me to find my Uncle Bidault? And in what a hovel he lives! But Monsieur Mitral, who knows his ways, says that he transacts all his business between eight o'clock and noon, that after that hour he can

only be found at the café named *Thémis,* a peculiar name—"

"Is justice done there?" said the Abbé Gaudron, laughing.

"Why does he go to a café at the corner of Rue Dauphine and the Quai des Augustins? It is said that he plays dominoes there every evening with his friend, Monsieur Gobseck. I do not care to go there alone; my uncle takes me there and calls for me."

At this moment appeared Mitral's yellow face and sleek wig, which looked as though it were made of dog-grass; he motioned to his niece to come immediately, so as not to waste time which cost two francs per hour. Madame Baudoyer left at this time without giving any explanation to her father or her husband.

As soon as Élisabeth had disappeared, Monsieur Gaudron said to Monsieur Baudoyer:

"In this woman heaven has given you a treasure of prudence and virtue, a model of wisdom, a Christian woman possessing a divine spirit. Religion alone is able to form such perfect characters. Tomorrow, I will say mass for the success of the good cause! The interests of the monarchy and religion require that you shall be appointed. Monsieur Rabourdin is a Liberal; he subscribes to the *Journal des Débats,* a dangerous paper, which made war on the Comte de Villèle, to serve the defeated interests of Monsieur de Chateaubriand. His Eminence will read the newspaper this evening, if only for the sake of

his poor friend, Monsieur de la Billardière, and Monsiegneur, the coadjutor, will speak to him about you and Rabourdin. I am acquainted with the curate; when thinking of his dear church, he will not forget you in his address; further, he is at this moment dining with the coadjutor, at the house of the curate of Saint-Roch."

At these words, Saillard and Baudoyer began to perceive that Élisabeth had not been idle since the time Godard had informed her.

"Isn't she shrewd, this Élisabeth," said Saillard, who comprehended more clearly than the abbé the rapid mole's path which his daughter had made.

"She sent Godard to Monsieur Rabourdin's door to find out what newspaper he took," said Gaudron; "and I told the result of my observations to the secretary of His Eminence, for we live in a time when the church and the throne ought to take especial care to find out who are their friends and who their enemies."

"I have been five days trying to make up a sentence to say to the wife of His Excellency," said Saillard."

"All Paris will read it," said Baudoyer, whose eyes were riveted on the newspaper.

"Your eulogy has cost us four thousand eight hundred francs, my boy," said Madame Saillard.

"You have embellished God's house," the Abbé Gaudron replied.

"We might have saved our souls without that," she continued. "But if Baudoyer gets the place,

which is worth eight thousand francs more than he receives at present, the expenditure will not be so great. And if he should not get it?—Hey! my Mother!" she said, while glancing at her husband, "what a bleeding!—"

"Ah! well," said Saillard, enthusiastically, "we would make up our deficiency through Falleix, who is now about to extend his business by making use of his brother, whom he has made a stock-broker purposely. Élisabeth should certainly have told us why Falleix has gone away so suddenly. But let us compose the sentence. This is what I have thus far thought of: *Madame, if you would only say a word or two to His Excellency—"*

"*If you would!*" said Gaudron, "or, if to speak more respectfully, *condescend*. Besides, you must find out, before everything, whether Madame la Dauphine will grant you her support, for then you would be able to suggest the idea of co-operating with the wishes of Her Royal Highness."

"It will also be necessary to designate the vacant place," said Baudoyer.

"*Madame la Comtesse,*" replied Saillard, rising and smiling agreeably at his wife.

"Jesus! Saillard, how droll you are! But, my son, take care now; you will make the woman laugh."

"*Madame la Comtesse*, have I improved?" he said, while looking at his wife.

"Yes, my darling."

"*The place of the late worthy Monsieur de la Billardière is vacant; my son-in-law, Monsieur Baudoyer—*"

"A man of great talent and extreme piety," Gaudron whispered.

"Write it down, Baudoyer," said old Saillard; "write that sentence."

Baudoyer naïvely took his pen and wrote down his own praises without blushing; this he did absolutely as Nathan or Canalis would have done in describing one of their own books.

"Madame la Comtesse—do you see?" said Saillard to his wife. "I am supposing that you are the minister's wife."

"Do you take me for a simpleton? I understand it," she replied.

"The place of the late worthy Monsieur de la Billardière is vacant; my son-in-law, Monsieur Baudoyer, a man of great talent and extreme piety—"

After looking at Monsieur Gaudron, who was reflecting, he added:

"Would be very happy if he should get it. Ah! that is not bad; it is brief, and at the same time says everything that is necessary."

"But wait, Saillard! Do you not see that the abbé is meditating?" said his wife; "do not disturb him now."

"Would be very happy if you would deign to interest yourself in his behalf," replied Gaudron, *"and, in saying a word or two to His Excellency, you would especially please the Dauphiness, by whom he has the honor of being protected."*

"Ah! Monsieur Gaudron, this sentence alone is worth the monstrance; I now regret less the four

thousand eight hundred.—Besides, say then, Baudoyer, you will pay them, my lad!—Have you written everything down?"

"I shall make you repeat it, mother!" said Madame Saillard, "and I will make you say it over every morning and evening. Yes, very well turned, is this sentence! How happy you must be that you are so wise, Monsieur Gaudron! See what it is to have studied in the seminaries; there one learns to speak to God and His saints."

"He is as good as he is learned," said Baudoyer, while pressing the priest's hands. "Did you write that article?" he asked, at the same time showing him the newspaper.

"No," said Gaudron, "this was written by the Secretary to His Eminence, a young abbé who is under great obligations to me and who is interested in Monsieur Colleville; in times past I paid his expenses at college."

"A good deed always has its reward," said Baudoyer.

While these four people sat down to their game of boston, Élisabeth and her Uncle Mitral had reached the *café Thémis,* after having talked all the way there about the business which Élisabeth's tact told her was the most powerful lever to force the minister's hand. Uncle Mitral, the former sheriff's officer, who excelled in trickery, in expedients and in judicial precautions, believed that the honor of his family was involved in the appointment of his nephew. His avarice led him to sound the wealth of

Gigonnet, for he knew that, in order of succession, this would revert to his nephew, Baudoyer; so he desired that this nephew should have a position in keeping with the fortune which the Saillards and Gigonnet were one day to possess, all of which would be inherited by Baudoyer's little daughter. To what heights might not a girl aspire were her fortune to consist of an income of more than a hundred thousand francs! He adopted the opinions of his niece and comprehended them. Thus he had accelerated the departure of Falleix by explaining to him the advantage to be gained by taking post-horses. After which, during the dinner he reflected on the turn he wished to give to the plan invented by Élisabeth.

On arriving at the *café Thémis*, he told his niece that he alone could arrange the business with Gigonnet, and he made her wait in the cab, so that she might not intervene until the proper time, and in the right place. Through the window, Élisabeth perceived the two figures of Gobseck and her Uncle Bidault standing out in bold relief against the bright yellow woodwork of this old café, like two cameo-heads, cold and impassible, in the position chosen by the engraver. These two Parisian misers were surrounded by several old faces, on which thirty per cent discount seemed written in the circular wrinkles, which started from the nose, and turned around the frigid cheek-bones. These faces became animated at the sight of Mitral, and their eyes glistened with tigerish curiosity.

"Ah! ah! there is Papa Mitral," said Chaboisseau. This little old man discounted for the book-trade.

"Yes, upon my word," replied a paper-dealer named Métivier. "Ah! he is an old monkey who knows how to make grimaces."

"And you, you are an old raven well versed about carcasses," Mitral replied.

"True," said the stern Gobseck.

"What are you here for, my son? Have you come to seize our friend Métivier?" Gigonnet said, pointing out to him the wholesale paper-dealer, who had the red face of an old porter.

"Your great-niece, Élisabeth, is there, Papa Gigonnet," Mitral whispered in his ear.

"What! some misfortune?" said Bidault.

The old man contracted his eyebrows and assumed a tender look, like that of an executioner, when preparing to fulfil the duties of his office. In spite of his Roman virtue, he must have been moved, for his nose, ordinarily so red, had lost a little of its color.

"Eh, so! Suppose it is some misfortune, will you not help Saillard's daughter, a young woman who has knitted you stockings for the last thirty years?" cried Mitral.

"If there is security, I will not say that I will not!" Gigonnet replied. "Falleix is interested in this affair. Your Falleix has established his brother as a stock-broker, and he is doing as much business as the Brézacs,—with what capital? With his brains, is it not so! At least Saillard is not a child."

"He knows the value of money," said Chaboisseau.

That remark, uttered among these old men, as they all shook their heads, would have made an artist shiver.

"Well, that does not concern me; that is the misfortune of my neighbors," Bidault-Gigonnet replied. "It is my principle never to be too intimate with my friends, or my relations. One does not perish except by one's weak point. Ask Gobseck; he is kind."

The usurers applauded this sentiment by a movement of their metallic heads. Any one seeing them would have fancied that he heard the creaking of badly greased machinery.

"Come, Gigonnet, show a little feeling," said Chaboisseau; "during thirty years she has knitted you stockings."

"Ah! that is worth considering," said Gobseck.

"You are alone, I can speak freely," said Mitral, after having examined those around him. "I have come on good business."—

"Why do you come to us, if it is good?" said Gigonnet harshly, interrupting Mitral.

"A Gars who was gentleman of the bed-chamber, an old *Chouan*,—his name?—La Billardière is dead."

"True?" said Gobseck.

"And our nephew is giving monstrances to the churches!" said Gigonnet.

"He is not fool enough to give them; he sells

them," Papa Mitral proudly replied. "He is desirous of obtaining Monsieur de la Billardière's position, and to get it, it is necessary to seize."

"*Seize*, always the sheriff," said Métivier, touching Mitral on the shoulder in a friendly way. "I like that, I do!"

"To seize Monsieur Chardin des Lupeaulx in our clutches," Mitral replied. "Now, Élisabeth has found a way to do it, which is—"

"Élisabeth!" cried Gigonnet, once more interrupting. "Dear little creature, she resembles her grandfather, my poor brother! There was no one like Bidault! Ah! if you had only seen him at the sales of old furniture. What tact! How shrewd!—What does she want?"

"Look, look," said Mitral. "You have found your bowels of compassion very quickly, Papa Gigonnet. There must be a reason for this phenomenon."

"Child!" said Gobseck to Gigonnet, "you are always too quick."

"Come, Gobseck and Gigonnet, my masters, you need des Lupeaulx, you remember having plucked him. You are afraid that he will demand some of his down," said Mitral.

"Shall we tell him about it, Gobseck?" asked Gigonnet.

"Mitral is on our side; he would not do a bad turn toward his old customers," Gigonnet replied. "Ah! so, Mitral, we have, among us three," he whispered to the old sheriff, "just bought up all

those debts, the acknowledgment of which depends on the decision of the commission of liquidation."

"What can you lose?" asked Mitral.

"Nothing," said Gobseck.

"It is not known that we are concerned in this affair," added Gigonnet; "Samanou serves as our screen."

"Listen to me, Gigonnet," said Mitral. "It is cold, and your great-niece is waiting. Three words will explain all. It will be necessary to send, between you two, two hundred and fifty thousand francs, without interest, to Falleix, who is now thirty miles from Paris, going post-haste, with a courier sent ahead."

"Is that possible?" said Gobseck.

"Where is he going?" cried Gigonnet.

"To des Lupeaulx's magnificent estate," said Mitral. "He is familiar with the country; he intends to buy the land surrounding the shanty belonging to the secretary-general for the aforesaid two hundred and fifty thousand francs, excellent land which will always be well worth the price paid for it. In nine days the legal papers must be drawn up—do not lose sight of that!—. With this little addition, the land belonging to des Lupeaulx will pay a thousand francs taxes. *Ergo*, des Lupeaulx can then become elector of the great college, eligible for the Chamber, count, and everything he desires! You know the deputy who has ruined himself?"

The two misers made an affirmative sign.

"Des Lupeaulx would be willing to have his leg

cut off in order to become a deputy," Mitral replied. "But he wishes to have the contracts we are about to show him drawn up in his own name, and then mortgage them—as is well understood—to us for our loan, with subrogation in favor of the sellers.—Ah! ah! you see through it?—First of all, we must obtain the position for Baudoyer; after that is attained we will reconsider des Lupeaulx! Falleix is to remain in the country and prepare the election campaign; thus you stake des Lupeaulx in the game through Falleix during the whole time of the election, a district election where Falleix's friends form the majority. Is not Falleix concerned in this affair, Papa Gigonnet?"

"So is Mitral," said Métivier. "This game is well played."

"It is decided," said Gigonnet. "Is it not so, Gobseck? Falleix will sign vouchers for us and make out the mortgages in his own name; we will go and see des Lupeaulx at the proper time."

"And we," said Gobseck, "we are robbed."

"Ah! papa," said Mitral, "I would very much like to know who the robber is."

"Eh! we can only rob ourselves," Gigonnet rejoined. "We thought we were doing well by buying up the claims of all des Lupeaulx's creditors at sixty per cent discount."

"Place a mortgage on his estate and you will hold him still more by the interest!" replied Mitral.

"Possibly," said Gobseck.

After exchanging a shrewd glance with Gobseck,

Bidault, called Gigonnet, came to the door of the café.

"Élisabeth, continue in the course you have begun," said he to his niece. "We have your man in our grasp, but do not neglect the accessories. You have begun well, shrewd woman! complete what you have attempted and you will have the esteem of your uncle!"—

And he grasped her gayly by the hand.

"But," said Mitral, "Métivier and Chaboisseau are able to play us false by going this evening to the office of some opposition newspaper, catching the ball on its way and once more seizing the ministerial article. Go alone, my dear; I dare not loosen my hold on these two cormorants."

Then he re-entered the café.

"To-morrow the funds will go to their destination by an order on the receiver-general. We will find *at our friend's* three hundred thousand francs on his paper," said Gigonnet to Mitral when the sheriff came to speak to the discounter.

The next day, the numerous subscribers of the liberal journal, read in the news of Paris an article inserted by the authority of Chaboisseau and Métivier, shareholders in two journals, discounters for the publishing, printing and paper trades, whose requests no editor dared refuse.

Here is the article:

"Yesterday a ministerial journal plainly indicated as a successor to Baron de la Billardiere, Monsieur Baudoyer, one of the worthiest citizens of a populous quarter, where his

benevolence is scarcely less known than his piety, on which the ministerial organ lays so much stress; that paper might have spoken about his ability! But did it think that by boasting of the ancient bourgeois family to which Monsieur Baudoyer belongs,—which certainly is a title of nobility in its way equal to any other—it would point out a reason for the probable exclusion of its candidate? Wanton perfidy! The good old lady caresses before she kills, according to her custom. To appoint Monsieur Baudoyer would be to honor the virtues and talents of the middle-classes,—who will always have our support,—although we may often see our cause lost. This appointment would be an act of justice and good policy, which the ministry will not permit itself to carry out. The religious journal has just now more spirit than its readers; for they will find fault with it."

The next morning, Friday, the day for him to dine at the house of Madame Rabourdin, whom des Lupeaulx had left at midnight, radiant in her beauty, on the staircase of the Bouffons, arm in arm with Madame de Camps—Madame Firmiani had lately married—the old roué awoke, his thoughts of vengeance calmed, or rather refreshed; he was occupied in thinking of the last glance he had exchanged with Madame Rabourdin.

"I will make sure of Rabourdin's support by pardoning him for the present, but later I will take my revenge. If he does not obtain this position, for the moment, I shall have to renounce a woman who may become one of the most precious instruments in the pursuit of high political fortune; she understands everything, shrinks from nothing; and then, in the presence of the minister, I must pretend I have no knowledge of the plan of administration

Rabourdin has invented! Go ahead, dear des Lupeaulx, you must win everything for your Célestine. It is no use your making wry faces, Madame la Comtesse, you will invite Madame Rabourdin to your next evening given to intimate friends."

Des Lupeaulx was one of those men who, in order to satisfy a passion, are able to hide their revenge in the corner of their hearts. Thus his mind was made up, he resolved to get Rabourdin appointed.

"I will prove to you, dear chief, that I merit a good place in your diplomatic establishment," he said, as he seated himself in his office and unfolded his newspaper.

He knew too well, by five o'clock, what the ministerial journal would contain, to take any pleasure in reading it; but he opened it to look over the article on de la Billardière, while thinking of the dilemma in which Du Bruel had placed him by bringing him the mischievous article written by Bixiou. He could not help laughing while re-reading the biography of the late Comte de Fontaine, who had died some months before, which Bixiou had reprinted as the biography of La Billardière, when all at once des Lupeaulx's eyes were dazzled by the name of Baudoyer. He became furious as he read the specious article which pledged the ministry. He rang the bell violently and called for Dutocq, whom he sent to the newspaper office. What was his astonishment when he read the reply of the opposition! for, by chance, he had received the

liberal journal first. Things looked serious. He knew this party, and the master who was shuffling his cards seemed to him a thorough Greek in masterly skill. In placing it so cleverly in two antagonistic newspapers at once,—on the same evening,—and in beginning the fight by guessing the intention of the minister, he thought he traced the pen of a liberal editor of his acquaintance, and so he resolved to question him that evening at the Opera.

Dutocq appeared.

"Read that," des Lupeaulx said to him, handing the two newspapers, while continuing to glance over the others to see if Baudoyer had pulled any more wires. "Go and see who has dared to compromise the ministry in this way."

"It is certainly not Monsieur Baudoyer," replied Monsieur Dutocq, "for he did not leave the office yesterday. I need not go to the newspaper office, for yesterday, when taking your article, I met the abbé, who came furnished with a letter from the Grand Almoner, before which you yourself would have had to bow."

"Dutocq, you have a grudge against Monsieur Rabourdin, and that is not fair, for he has twice prevented your discharge. But we cannot control our feelings. It is possible to hate one's benefactor. Only, know that if you allow yourself to commit the slightest breach of faith against Monsieur Rabourdin until I give you leave, it will be to your loss; in that case you could count me as your enemy. As to

my friend's journal, let the Grand Almoner himself subscribe for as many copies as we do, if he wishes the exclusive control. It is now the end of the year, the question of subscriptions will soon be discussed, and then we shall have our say in the matter. As to La Billardière's position, the way to settle it is to make a nomination this very day."

"Gentlemen," said Dutocq, returning to his office and addressing his colleagues, "I do not know if Bixiou has the gift of reading the future, but if you have not read the ministerial journal, I entreat you to read the article on Baudoyer; then, as Monsieur Fleury takes the opposition sheet, you can see the reply. It is true that Monsieur Rabourdin has some talent, but a man who, in the present time, gives monstrances worth six thousand francs to the churches is also possessed of a devilish amount of talent!"

BIXIOU—entering.

"What do you say to the *First Epistle to the Corinthians* in our religious journal, and the *Epistle to the Ministers* in the liberal journal?—How does Monsieur Rabourdin feel now, Du Bruel?"

DU BRUEL—arriving.

"I do not know.—He leads Bixiou into his office and whispers to him.—My friend, your method of helping people resembles that of the executioner who places his foot on your shoulders so that he may more easily break your neck. You got me into a snare with des Lupeaulx, merited by my folly. It was fine, that article

about Billardière! I will not forget that trick. The first sentence seemed to say to the king: *You must die.* The sentence about Quiberon clearly signified that the king was a ——. In fact, everything was ironical."

BIXIOU—beginning to laugh.

"Stop, you are getting angry! One cannot even *joke?*"

DU BRUEL.

"Joke! joke! When you ask to be made deputy-chief, you will be replied to in jokes, my boy."

BIXIOU—in a threatening tone.

"Are we angry?"

DU BRUEL.

"Yes."

BIXIOU—dryly.

"Very well, so much the worse for you—"

DU BRUEL—thoughtful and anxious

"Would you pardon that?"

BIXIOU—in a wheedling tone.

"To a friend? I think so!—Fleury's voice was heard.—Here comes Fleury who cursed Baudoyer. Hey! is the game well played? Baudoyer will gain the position.— Confidentially. —After all, so much the better. Du Bruel, follow up the sequence carefully. Rabourdin would be a dunce to stay under Baudoyer; he will send in his resignation, and that will give us two places to fill. You will be chief, and you will take me for head-clerk. We will write vaudevilles together, and I shall dig away at your work in the office."

DU BRUEL—smiling.

"Stay, I never thought of that. Poor Rabourdin! That would trouble me, though."

BIXIOU.

"Ah! that shows how much you love him?—Changing his tone.—Ah! well, I do not pity him any longer. After all, he is rich; his wife gives her evenings at home, and never invites me, and I go everywhere! Well, my good Du Bruel, adieu. Do not bear me a grudge!—He leaves the office.—Adieu, gentlemen. Did I not tell you yesterday that a man who possessed nothing but virtue and talent would always be poor, even with a pretty wife?"

FLEURY.

"You are very rich, you!"

BIXIOU.

"Not badly off, my dear Cincinnatus! But you will treat me to that dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale*."

POIRET.

"It is always impossible for me to understand Monsieur Bixiou."

PHELLION—with a dejected air.

"Monsieur Rabourdin so rarely reads the papers that it might perhaps be a good thing to deprive ourselves of them temporarily by taking them to him."—Fleury hands him his newspaper. Vimeux gives him the one belonging to the office; he takes the papers and departs.

*

At that moment des Lupeaulx, who was going down stairs on his way to breakfast with the minister, was asking himself whether, before employing his trickish schemes to assist the husband, prudence might not suggest that he sound the heart of the wife, so as to know if he would be rewarded for his devotion. He was feeling for the little heart which he possessed, when, on the staircase, he met his lawyer, who said to him, smilingly: "Just two words, Monseigneur?" in the familiar tone of people who know that they are indispensable.

"What is it, my dear Desroches?" said the politician. "What misfortune has happened to me? They are angry, these gentlemen, and do not know how to do things as I do: that is, to wait!"

"I have come to warn you that all your notes are in the hands of Sieurs Gobseck and Gigonnet, under the name of a Monsieur Samanou."

"Men whom I placed in the way of making immense sums!"

"Listen," the lawyer whispered to him, "Gigonnet is called Bidault; he is the uncle of Saillard, your cashier, and Saillard is the father-in-law of a certain Baudoyer, who thinks himself entitled to the vacant position in your ministry. Am I not right in warning you?"

"Thank you," said des Lupeaulx, saluting the lawyer with a shrewd glance.

"One stroke of your pen and you will be released," said Desroches, leaving him.

"What an immense sacrifice!" said des Lupeaulx to himself. "It is impossible to explain it to a woman," he thought. "Is Célestine worth more than the discharge from all my debts? I will go and see her this morning."

Thus the beautiful Madame Rabourdin would, a few hours later, be the arbitrator of her husband's future; no power could foresee the importance of her replies, while no sign could warn her to compose her behavior and her voice. And if, unfortunately, she believed that she was sure of success, she did not know that Rabourdin was undermined in all directions by the secret labors of those borers.

"Ah! well, Monseigneur," said des Lupeaulx, as he entered the little parlor where breakfast was served, "have you read the articles about Baudoyer?"

"For the love of God, my friend," replied the minister, "let the nominations alone for these few moments. They split my head yesterday with this monstrance. If Rabourdin is to be saved, his appointment must be brought under the consideration of the Council; otherwise my hand will be forced. Such things make one disgusted with business. To protect Rabourdin, it is necessary for us to promote a certain Colleville—

"Will you allow me to manage this vaudeville, and do not trouble yourself about it? I will entertain

DES LUPEAULX AT MME. RABOURDIN'S

The secretary-general was, of all others, the last person the beautiful Madame Rabourdin expected to see, and when she heard the creak of his boots on the stairway, she cried: "The hair-dresser so early!" an exclamation which was as disagreeable for des Lupeaulx to hear as the sight of des Lupeaulx was to her. She retreated hastily into her bedroom.

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you every morning with an account of the game of chess I would play with the Grand Almoner," said des Lupeaulx.

"Very well," replied the minister, "settle it with the chief of staff. Do you know that nothing is more likely to strike the King's mind than the reasons contained in the opposition journal? Managing a minister with a man like Baudoyer!"

"A devout imbecile," replied des Lupeaulx, "and as incapable as—"

"As La Billardière," said the minister.

"La Billardière had at least the manners of a gentleman-in-ordinary of the bed-chamber," replied des Lupeaulx. "Madame," he continued, addressing the countess, "it now becomes necessary for you to invite Madame Rabourdin to your next select reception. Let me tell you that Madame de Camps is her intimate friend; they were together yesterday at the Opera, and I became acquainted with her at the Hôtel Firmiani. Besides, you will see that she is not the kind of person to spoil your evening."

"My friend, invite Madame Rabourdin, and let us speak of something else," said the minister.

"Célestine is now in my grasp," said des Lupeaulx, as he went up to his room to make his morning toilet.

Parisian housewives strain every point to keep pace with the luxury which surrounds them on every side, and few of them are wise enough to make only such show as their income will warrant. But this

vice is perhaps the result of a patriotism peculiarly French, which aims at preserving for France its supremacy in regard to dress. France reigns over all Europe by means of her garments; each member of that nation feels the necessity of retaining a commercial sceptre which makes fashion to France what the navy is to England. This patriotic ardor, which sacrifices everything to *paroistre*—to appearance—as d'Aubigné said in the days of Henry IV., is the cause of those vast and concealed efforts which occupy all the mornings of a Parisian woman, when she wishes, as Madame Rabourdin did, to keep up a style, with her twelve thousand francs, which many rich people with thirty thousand do not attempt. Thus, on Fridays—the day of her dinner parties—Madame Rabourdin assisted the chambermaid to arrange the rooms; for the cook went early to the market and the man-servant was busy cleaning the silver, folding the napkins, polishing the glasses. The ill-advised person who, through an oversight of the porter, should gain entrance to Madame Rabourdin's house at eleven or twelve o'clock would have found her in the midst of a confusion by no means picturesque, clothed in her dressing-gown, her feet encased in old slippers, her hair carelessly dressed, arranging the lamps, fixing the flower-pots with her own hands, or hastily cooking a very unromantic breakfast. The visitor to whom the mysteries of Parisian life were unfamiliar would certainly have learned not to intrude his foot behind the scenes; for he would be at once

marked as a man capable of the greatest atrocities; the woman surprised while in the midst of her morning duties would speak of his stupidity and of his indiscretion in such a manner as to destroy his prospects.

The Parisian woman, so lenient in all curiosity which is to her advantage, is implacable in that by which she would lose her prestige. Is not such an invasion of the home not only like what the police-reports call an attack on the privacy, but a burglary with house-breaking, the theft of what is considered most precious, *credit!* A woman is quite ready to be seen slightly clad, with her hair falling about her; if it is all her own, she gains admiration thereby; but she does not wish to be seen when she is doing her own housework; she then loses her *paroistre.* Madame Rabourdin was in the midst of her Friday's work, in the midst of the provisions which the cook had fished from the ocean of the market, when Monsieur des Lupeaulx made his way slyly to her house.

The secretary-general was, of all others, the last person the beautiful Madame Rabourdin expected to see, and when she heard the creak of his boots on the stairway, she cried: "The hair-dresser so early!" an exclamation which was as disagreeable for des Lupeaulx to hear as the sight of des Lupeaulx was to her. She retreated hastily into her bedroom, which was crowded with an alarming confusion of pieces of furniture which were to be put out of sight, heterogeneous things in matters of

elegance, a true domestic *Mardi Gras.* Des Lupeaulx had the effrontery to follow the beautiful startled woman, so piquant did she seem to him in her dishabille. I do not know what attraction holds the eye; the flesh, seen through an opening in the dressing-gown, seems a thousand times more attractive than when it rises gracefully above the circular line traced on the back by the velvet piping, to the vanishing curve of the most beautiful swan-like neck, on which a lover ever left his kiss, before the ball. When the eye wanders over a woman in full dress, who displays her beautiful bosom, do we not fancy that we see the crowning dessert of a fine dinner? But the glance that penetrates through the material rumpled in sleep fastens itself on these dainty openings, and enjoys the luxury as one feasts on stolen fruit which blushes between two leaves on the wall.

"Stop! stop!" cried the pretty Parisian woman while bolting the door of her disordered room.

She rang for Thérèse, her maid, the cook, the man-servant, begging for a shawl, wishing for the whistle of the machinist at the Opera. The whistle sounded, and, in a turn of the hand, another phenomenon! something else happened! the chamber assumed the look of a dainty morning-room in harmony with a toilet hurriedly put together, which was this woman's particular gift. She now rose to the occasion.

"You here, at this hour!" she said. "What can be the matter?"

"The most serious things in the world," des Lupeaulx replied. "It is necessary that we come to an understanding to-day."

Célestine looked at this man through his glasses and understood.

"My chief vice," she said, "is that of being extremely whimsical, so I do not mix my affections with politics; let us talk about politics, business, and we will see afterwards. Besides, it is not a whim, it is the result of good taste, of my artistic sense, which keeps me from combining colors with those that do not harmonize, and causes me to avoid discords. We take our politics thus, we women!"

Already the tones of her voice, the gentleness of her manners, had produced their effect and had changed the roughness of the secretary-general into sentimental courtesy! She had recalled him to his obligations as a lover. A pretty woman who is clever makes an atmosphere about her in which the nerves relax, in which feelings soften.

"You are ignorant of what is taking place," brusquely replied Monsieur des Lupeaulx, who tried to appear rude. "Read."

He then offered the gracious Madame Rabourdin the two newspapers, with the articles marked with red ink. As she read, Célestine's shawl became unfastened without her knowledge, or by a trick well-disguised. At an age when the force of whims is in proportion to the rapidity of their changes, des Lupeaulx could not keep himself cool, any more than could Célestine.

"How! but this is dreadful!" she said. "Who is this Baudoyer?"

"A donkey," said des Lupeaulx; "but you see he carries the relics, and will get there conducted by the cunning hand that holds the bridle."

The remembrance of Madame Rabourdin's debts passed before her, and blinded her as though she had seen two consecutive flashes of lightning; her ears tingled under the pressure of the blood which beat in her arteries; she remained as one stupefied, absently looking at a curtain-hook.

"But you are true to us!" she said to des Lupeaulx, in giving him a caressing glance, so as to attach him to her.

"That depends," he said, while he answered her glance by an inquisitive look which made this poor woman blush.

"If you demand a deposit, you will lose all the price," she said, laughingly. "I thought you a greater man than you are. And, as for you, you think of me as very small, a boarding-school miss!"

"You have not understood me," he replied, with a shrewd air. "I would say that I could not assist a man who plays against me, like l'Étourdi played against Mascarille."

"What does this mean?"

"This will prove to you whether or not I am magnanimous."

So he presented Madame Rabourdin with the paper stolen by Dutocq, showing her the part where her husband had so cleverly analyzed him.

"Read that!"

Célestine recognized the handwriting, read and turned pale under the blow of this tomahawk.

"All the ministries are mentioned," said des Lupeaulx.

"But happily," said she, "you alone possess this document, which I am at a loss to explain."

"He who has stolen it is not so silly but that he has had a copy made; he is too great a liar to admit it, and too wise in his business to give it up. I even have not attempted to speak of it."

"Who is he?"

"Your head-clerk."

"Dutocq. One never suffers except for his benefactions!—But," she replied, "he is a dog who desires a bone."

"Do you know what they offer me, poor devil of a secretary-general?"

"What?"

"I owe some thirty and more thousand miserable francs; you will have a very bad opinion of me, when you learn that I do not owe more; but in that I am only a beginner! Ah! well, Baudoyer's uncle has just bought my debts, and will doubtless give me my titles."

"But that is an infernal plan."

"Not at all, it is monarchical and religious, for the Grand Almonry is concerned in it—"

"What are you going to do?"

"What will you bid me do?" said he, with adorable grace, while holding her hand.

Célestine did not find that he was ugly, old, or with time-frosted hair, secretary-general, or anything impure; but she did not give him her hand; of an evening in the salon she would have let him take it a hundred times, but in the morning, and alone, this familiarity constituted a too positive promise, which might lead her astray.

"And it is said that statesmen have no hearts," she said, in trying to disguise the harshness of her refusal under the grace of her words. "That used to terrify me," she added, in assuming the most innocent air in the world.

"What a calumny!" replied des Lupeaulx.

"One of the stiffest diplomatists, who has been in power since his birth, has just married the daughter of an actress, and has gained her admission to the most rigid court as to quarterings of nobility."

"And you will support us?"

"I will work for the appointment. But no cheating!"

She gave him her hand to kiss and patted him on the cheek.

"You are mine," she said.

Des Lupeaulx admired that expression.—That evening at the Opera the fop related it after this fashion: "A woman, not wishing to tell a man she was his, an acknowledgment that a well-bred woman never makes, said to him: 'You are mine! How do you like the turn for a change?'"

"But you must be my ally," he replied. "Your husband has spoken to the minister about a plan of

government in which is to be found the article in which I am criticised; learn all about it, and tell me this evening."

"That shall be done," she said, without seeing the great importance of the business which caused des Lupeaulx to visit her so early in the morning.

"Madame, the hair-dresser," said the maid.

"We have had to wait for him some time. I do not know what I would have done had he remained longer," thought Célestine.

"You do not know to what lengths my devotion will go," des Lupeaulx said, as he arose. "You are to be invited to the next exclusive soirée at the house of the minister's wife—"

"Ah! you are an angel," she said. "And I now see how much you love me; you love me intelligently."

"This evening, dear child," he replied, "I will find out at the Opera which journalists are conspiring for Baudoyer, and we will compare our notes."

"Yes, but you are to dine with us, are you not? I have tried to have the dishes you most like."

"All that, however, seems so like love, that it would seem sweet to be thus deceived for a long time!" said des Lupeaulx to himself, as he descended the stairs. "But if she is trifling with me, I shall know it. I will prepare the cleverest of all traps, before the appointment is signed, so that I may read in her heart. My little kittens, we know you! for, after all, women are just what we men are! Twenty-eight years and virtuous, and here in Rue Duphot!

A very rare good fortune, and one worthy of cultivation."

The eligible butterfly then skipped down the stairs.

"*Mon Dieu*, that man—without his glasses and powdered hair—must make a very ridiculous appearance in his dressing-gown!" said Célestine to herself. "He has a harpoon in his back, and will tow me at length where I wish to go:—to the minister's house. He has played his part in my comedy."

When, at five o'clock, Rabourdin came home to dress, his wife helped him to make his toilet, and told him about this memorandum, which, like the slipper in the tale of the *Arabian Nights*, the poor man was obliged to see wherever he went.

"Who gave it to you?" said Rabourdin, stupefied.

"Monsieur des Lupeaulx."

"He has been here?" asked Rabourdin, as he gave his wife a look which would have made a guilty woman turn pale, but which met a brow of marble and a laughing eye.

"And he will return to dine with us," she answered. "Why this startled expression?"

"My dear," said Rabourdin, "I have mortally offended des Lupeaulx. Such people never pardon, and still he courts my favor! Do you think I cannot see the reason for this?"

"This man," she answered, "seems to me to have very good taste; I cannot blame him for that. Besides, I can think of nothing more flattering to a woman than to reawaken a lost appetite. After—"

"Enough nonsense, Célestine! Spare a downtrodden man. I am unable to meet the minister, and my honor is at stake."

"Heavens! no. Dutocq shall be promised a position, and you will be chief of division."

"I guess what you mean, dear child," said Rabourdin; "but the rôle which you play is as dishonorable as the reality. A lie is a lie, and a true woman—"

"Allow me, then, to employ the same weapons which are used against us."

"Célestine, the more this man sees that he is caught in a snare, the more he will be against me."

"And if I can thwart his plans?"

Rabourdin regarded his wife with astonishment.

"I am thinking only of your advancement, and it is high time, my poor friend!" replied Célestine.—"But you mistake the hunting-dog for the game," she said, after a pause. "In a few days des Lupeaulx can readily accomplish his mission. While you are seeking to speak to the minister, and before you can see him, I shall have spoken with him. You have strained every nerve to give birth to a plan which you have hidden from me; and, in three months from now, your wife will have done more work than you have accomplished in six years. Tell me your beautiful plan!"

Rabourdin continued shaving, and, after having made his wife promise not to tell a single word about his work, and warning her that to confide even one idea to des Lupeaulx would be to put the cat within

reach of the bowl of milk, commenced an explanation of his work.

"Rabourdin, why have you not already told me this?" said Célestine, stopping her husband as he finished his fifth sentence. "You would have saved yourself useless trouble. I know how blinded one can become by one idea for a moment, but for six or seven years, that seems incredible. You want to reduce the budget—a common and middle-class idea! We ought to have a budget of two thousand millions, then France would be twice as great. A new system might be brought about by setting everything moving by loans, like Monsieur Nucingen proposes. The poorest treasury is that with a surplus which it never utilizes. The mission of a minister of finance is to fling money out of the windows, it will return to him through the cellars; and you would make him hoard the public money! But it is necessary that the number of officials should be increased, not reduced. Instead of redeeming the debts, it would be preferable to increase the number of bondholders. If the Bourbons would reign in peace, they ought to create bondholders in the smallest boroughs, and, above all, not allow foreigners to receive interest in France of which they would some day surely require the principal, while if all state funds are held in France, neither France nor her credit will perish. That is the way England was saved. Your plan is like that of a little middle-class man. An ambitious man would not have dared to present himself before

the minister except as a Law, without his risky schemes; by stating the power of credit, by showing that we should not diminish our capital, but reduce the interest, just as the English do!"

"Go ahead, Célestine," said Rabourdin, "jumble up everything, turn everything wrong-side out; amuse yourself as with a toy! I am accustomed to that. But do not criticise a work of which you are yet ignorant."

"Do I need," she said, "to know a scheme, the essence of which is to govern France with six thousand instead of twenty thousand officials? But, my friend, were this even a scheme of a man of genius, a king of France would be dethroned in trying to execute it. A feudal aristocracy can be subdued by striking off a few heads, but a hydra with a thousand heads cannot be subdued. No, the little ones cannot be crushed, they are too flat under foot. So it is with the present ministers,—between ourselves, a poor lot,—that you propose in this way to reform mankind! Reform interests, if you will, but mankind cannot be reformed. People cry out too much; while gold is dumb."

"But, Célestine, if you will always talk, and if you place wit before argument, we will never understand each other—"

"Ah! I understand what that paper, in which you have analyzed the capacities of the administrators, will lead to," she replied, without even having listened to her husband. "*Mon Dieu*, you yourself have sharpened the hatchet to cut off your own

head. Holy Virgin! Why did you not consult me? I would have prevented you from writing a single line; or, at least, if you would have written this memorandum, I would have copied it for you myself, and then it could never have gone further. My God, why did you not tell me? Such are men! They are capable of sleeping by the side of their wives and guarding a secret from them for seven years! To hide his thoughts from a poor woman for seven years is to doubt her devotion!"

"But," said Rabourdin, "for eleven years I have not been able to argue with you because you always cut my words short and substitute your ideas for mine.—You know nothing about my scheme."

"Nothing? I know everything."

"Tell it to me, then!" cried Rabourdin, angry for the first time since his marriage.

"There, it is half-past six; shave yourself, dress," she replied, after the manner of all women when pressed on a point upon which they should keep silence. "I am going to finish dressing, and we will adjourn the discussion, for I do not wish to be annoyed on my reception day.—Good heavens! the poor man!" she said, as she left, "to labor for seven years only to give birth to a scheme for his own destruction, and not to have trusted his wife." She re-entered.

"If you had listened to me in time, you would not have interceded to keep your head clerk, and he, without doubt, has a fac-simile of this document which he has stolen! Adieu, man of genius!"

Seeing her husband in a tragic attitude of grief, she found that she had gone too far; she ran toward him, and seized him, all lathered, and embraced him tenderly.

"Dear Xavier, do not be angry with me," she said. "This evening we will study your plan together, and then you can speak at your ease. I will listen as attentively and as long as you wish me to. Is not that amiable? Go, I do not ask for a better fate than to be the wife of Mahomet."

She began to laugh and Rabourdin could not help laughing also, for the white lather was clinging to Célestine's lips, and the tone of her voice indicated the depth of the purest and stanchest affection.

"Go, get dressed my child, and be especially careful to say nothing about it to des Lupeaulx, promise me! That is the only penance I impose on you."

"*Impose?*" she said; "then I will promise nothing."

"Come, Célestine, I said a serious thing jestingly."

"This evening," she answered, "your secretary-general will find out whom we have to combat, and I know whom to attack."

"Whom?" said Rabourdin.

"The minister," she answered, at the same time drawing herself up proudly.

Notwithstanding the loving grace of his dear Célestine, Rabourdin, while dressing, could not keep some sad thoughts from clouding his brow.

"When will she be capable of appreciating me?" he said to himself. "She will not even understand

that it is for her alone that I have undertaken this work! What a wrong-headed woman, and yet what intelligence she has. If I had not married, I would by this time have been high in office and rich! I would have saved five thousand francs a year of my salary. By investing this amount well, I would have by this time possessed ten thousand francs income besides my salary. I would have been a bachelor and have had a chance of becoming, by marriage—. Yes," he replied, interrupting his own thoughts, "but I have Célestine and my two children."

He took refuge in his happiness. In the happiest household there will always be moments of regret. He entered the parlor and looked at the room.

"In all Paris there cannot be found two women who understand how to manage a household as she does. With only twelve thousand francs income, and to accomplish all this!" he said, as he looked at his jardinières full of flowers, and thought of the homage which the world was about to pay him. "She was born to be the wife of a minister of state. When I think how the wife of His Excellency is of no assistance to him; she looks like a good, fat, middle-class woman, and when she goes to the château, or into the salons—"

He bit his lips. Men who are very busy have such false ideas about housekeeping, that it is just as easy to make them believe that a hundred thousand francs amount to nothing as that twelve thousand francs are sufficient to meet every expense.

Although impatiently expected, notwithstanding the favorite dishes prepared for his palate, the consummate gourmand, des Lupeaulx, did not come to dinner; he only arrived very late in the evening, at midnight,—an hour when conversation in every drawing-room becomes more intimate and confidential.

Andoche Finot, the journalist, still remained.

"I know everything," said des Lupeaulx, when he was comfortably seated on the sofa by the corner of the fire, his cup of tea in his hand. Madame Rabourdin stood before him, holding a plate full of sandwiches and some slices of cake very appropriately called plum-cake. "Finot, my dear and clever friend, you can render a service to our gracious queen by letting loose a few dogs on the men about whom we will speak. You have against you," he said to Rabourdin—while lowering his voice so as only to be heard by the three people to whom he spoke—"usurers, the clergy, money and the church. The article in the liberal journal was written at the request of an old money-lender to whom the paper was under obligations, but the young fellow who wrote it cares nothing about it. The editor-in-chief of this journal will be changed in three days and we shall gain the upper hand. The royalist opposition, for we have—thanks to Monsieur de Chateaubriand—a royalist opposition, that is to say, there are some royalists who have gone over to the liberals; but let us not discuss great political questions; these assassins of Charles X.

have promised me their support in fixing, as the price of your nomination, our support to one of their amendments. All my batteries are arranged. If they insist upon imposing Baudoyer on us, we will be able to say to the Grand Almonry, 'such and such a journal and *such and such* gentlemen will attack any law you wish, and the entire press will be opposed —for the ministerial journals which I influence will be deaf and dumb; they need not trouble to become so, they are sufficiently so.' Is that not so, Finot? 'Appoint Rabourdin and public opinion will be with you.' Poor, artless, provincial people who sit in state in their arm-chairs by the chimney-corner, feeling very happy, and very independent as to the mouth-piece of public opinion. Ah! ah!"

"Hi! hi! hi!" laughed Finot.

"So, keep quiet," said des Lupeaulx. "I have arranged everything this evening. The Grand Almonry will yield."

"I would rather have lost all hope and have had you at dinner," whispered Célestine to him, while looking at him with a grieved air which might have passed for an expression of extravagant love.

"Here is something that will obtain my pardon," he said, as he showed her an invitation for Tuesday's select reception.

Célestine opened the letter, and a flush of pleasure suffused her face. No pleasure can compare with that of gratified vanity.

"You know what the Tuesday evening will be," continued des Lupeaulx, assuming a mysterious air;

"it bears the same relation to our ministry as the Petit-château does to the court. You will be in the heart of power! The Countess Féraud will be there; she is always in favor, notwithstanding the death of Louis XVIII.; Delphine de Nucingen, Madame de Listomère, the Marquise d'Espard, your dear de Camps, for whom I have procured an invitation, so that you might find a support in case the women there should blackball you. I wish to see you in the midst of that set."

Célestine threw back her head like a thoroughbred before the race, and re-read the invitation, just as Baudoyer and Saillard had re-read their articles in the newspapers, without growing weary of it.

"There first; and some day to the Tuileries," she said to des Lupeaulx.

Des Lupeaulx was startled by her words and her attitude, because they expressed such great ambition and security.

"Am I but a stepping-stone?" he said.

He rose and went into Madame Rabourdin's bedroom, where she followed him, for she understood by the gesture of the secretary-general that he wished to speak with her privately.

"Well, tell me the scheme?" he said.

"Bah! The foolish dreamings of an honest man! He wants to suppress fifteen thousand officials, and retain only five or six thousand; you never heard of such an absurdity. I will let you read his document when the copy is finished. It is written in good faith. His analytic list of the officials was dictated

only by the most commendable thoughts. Poor, dear man!"

Des Lupeaulx was all the more reassured by the genuine laugh which accompanied these jestings and contemptuous words, especially as he was a judge of lying, and at this moment Célestine was sincere.

"But still, what is at the bottom of it all?" he asked.

"Ah! well, he would suppress the land-tax and substitute taxes on commodities."

"But it is over a year ago that François Keller and Nucingen proposed a plan somewhat like this, and the ministry is considering about lessening the land-tax."

"There! I told him that his plan was not a new one!" said Célestine, laughing.

"Yes, but he has come into collision with the great financier of the age, a man who, I say it between ourselves, is the Napoléon of finance; he ought at least to have some ideas as to how his plan should be executed."

"It is all commonplace," she said, with a disdainful expression on her lips. "Imagine governing France with five or six thousand officials; while, on the contrary, there ought not to be one person in France who is not interested in maintaining the monarchy."

Des Lupeaulx appeared to be satisfied that he had found that the man to whom he attributed superior talents was only of mediocre ability.

"Are you very sure of the nomination? Will you take a woman's advice?" she said to him.

"You are more skilled than we in refined treachery," said des Lupeaulx, shaking his head.

"Ah! well, speak for *Baudoyer* to the court and to the Grand Almonry, so as to avert all suspicion and put them off their guard; but at the last moment write: *Rabourdin.*"

"There are some women who say *yes* when they need a man, and *no* when he has played his part," replied des Lupeaulx.

"I know it," she said, laughing. "But they are very foolish, for in politics, one always regains one's position; that is good tactics with simpletons, but you are a clever man. According to my opinion, the greatest fault one can commit in life is to quarrel with a clever man."

"No," said des Lupeaulx; "for he will pardon. There is no danger except with little, spiteful natures who have nothing to do but to revenge themselves, and I pass my life at that."

After everyone had left, Rabourdin came into his wife's room, and, after having for once exacted her attention, he explained his plan, in making her understand that it did not restrict, but, on the contrary, that it increased the budget, by showing her in what way the public funds were to be employed, in explaining to her how the state would increase ten-fold the circulation of money, by putting its own in the proportion of a third or a fourth into the expenditures which would be sustained by

private or local interests. Thus he finally proved to her that his plan was less a theoretical work than a work fertile in methods of execution. Célestine was very enthusiastic; she threw her arms around her husband's neck and sat herself on his knee by the chimney-corner.

"Thus I find in you my ideal husband," she said. "The ignorance in which I have been in regard to your worth has saved you from des Lupeaulx's claws. I calumniated you to him wonderfully and in good faith."

This man wept with joy. He now had his day of triumph. After having undertaken everything to please his wife, he had become great in his own household!

"And to one who knows you to be so good, so gentle, of such an even disposition, so loving, you are ten times greater. But," she added, "a man of genius is always more or less a child, and you are a child, a much loved child." She drew forth her invitation from that secret hiding-place which women adopt and showed it to him.

"Here is what I want," she said. "Des Lupeaulx has gained me admittance to the ministry, and, were he of bronze, *His Excellency* shall for a time be my servant."

*

The next day Célestine was occupied with her preparations for attending the minister's select reception. It was her great day, her own! Never courtesan took so much care of herself as this good woman took of her person. Never was a dressmaker more tormented than hers, and never did a dressmaker realize more the importance of her art. At last, Madame Rabourdin had everything ready. She herself went to the livery-stable to choose a coupé which was neither old, middle-class, nor showy. Her servant, as is the case with servants of well-ordered houses, had the dress and appearance of a master. Then, toward ten o'clock in the evening of that eventful Tuesday, she left home in a charming mourning costume. Her hair was dressed with bunches of jet grapes most beautifully made, an ornament costing three thousand francs, which had been ordered at Fossin's establishment by an Englishwoman, who left without calling for it. The leaves were of stamped iron-work, as light as real vine leaves, and the artist had not forgotten the graceful tendrils, which were intended to twine in her curls, just as the natural ones catch on every branch. Her bracelets, her necklace and ear-rings were of what is called Berlin iron-work; but these delicate arabesques came from Vienna, and seemed as though made expressly by those fairies who, in

stories, are condemned by a jealous Carabosse to collect the eyes of ants, or to weave the pieces of linen so fine that they can be placed in a nutshell. Her figure—made more slender by her black dress—was shown to advantage by a carefully-cut dress which terminated at the shoulder in a curve without shoulder-pieces. At each movement it seemed that the woman, like a butterfly, was about to leave her envelope; nevertheless, the gown was held on by an ingenious invention of the dressmaker. The dress was of mousseline de laine, a material which the manufacturer had not as yet sent to the Paris markets, a *divine* material which was destined to become extremely fashionable. This success went further than the French fashions themselves. The real economy of the mousseline de laine, which does not require laundering, caused it to take the place of cotton fabrics to such an extent as to ruin the factory at Rouen. Célestine's feet, clad in stockings of fine mesh and Turkish satin slippers, —for, in deep mourning, silk satin is not permitted, —were elegantly shaped. Célestine, thus attired, looked very beautiful. Her complexion, freshened by a bran bath, had a soft brilliancy. Her eyes, bathed by the waves of hope, shining with animation, justified her claims to the superiority of which the happy and proud des Lupeaulx had spoken. She entered the room well; women know how to appreciate the meaning of this expression. She gracefully saluted the minister's wife, combining the deference due to her with the maintenance of her

own self-respect, and thus gave no offence, while she retained her own dignity, for every beautiful woman is a queen. Thus, with the minister she assumed that pretty air of impertinence which women permit themselves with men, even if they chance to be Grand Dukes. She examined the field while taking her seat, and realized that she was now in one of those select assemblages, few in number, where women could observe each other, appreciate each other, where the least word could be heard by all, where each glance could take effect, where conversation is a duel with witnesses, where all that is mediocre seems more ordinary, but where every merit is silently accepted, as though it were the natural level of each person. Rabourdin had gone into an adjoining room, where cards were being played, and there he stood conspicuously, so as to make himself noticed, which proves that he did not lack cleverness.

"My dear," said the Marquise d'Espard to the Countess Féraud,—the last of the mistresses of Louis XVIII.—"Paris is unique! It produces, unexpectedly, and from no one knows where, women like this one, who seem to be able to carry everything before them."—

"But she really accomplishes all that she wills to do," said des Lupeaulx, with an air of importance.

At this moment the subtle Madame Rabourdin was paying court to the minister's wife. Following the instructions which she had received the previous evening from des Lupeaulx, who knew the weak

points of the countess; she was flattering her without seeming to do so. Then she remained silent at the proper moment, for des Lupeaulx—even as much in love with this woman as he was—knew her faults, and had said to her the previous night: *"Above everything, avoid talking too much!"* A great proof of his love. Bertrand Barrère left this sublime maxim: *"Never interrupt a woman, while dancing, to give her advice;"* to which this may be added: *"Never blame a woman for strewing her pearls!"* completing thus this chapter on the female code. Conversation became general. From time to time Madame Rabourdin joined in it just as a tame cat places her paws on her mistress's laces with velvety touch, her claws concealed. As to his heart, the minister had few emotions. There was not a statesman under the Restoration who was less inclined to gallantry than he; and even the opposition papers, the *Miroir*, *Pandore*, and *Figaro*, could not find the least flutter of the heart with which to reproach him. His mistress was *l'Étoile*, and, strange to say, she remained faithful to him in misfortune, which will, without doubt, be ultimately to her gain. Madame Rabourdin knew this; but she also knew that ghosts return to old castles. She therefore conceived the idea of making the minister jealous of the good fortune, still conditional, which des Lupeaulx appeared to enjoy. At this moment des Lupeaulx was refreshing himself with the name of Célestine. In order to launch his intended mistress, he used every exertion to persuade the Marquise d'Espard,

Madame Nucingen and the countess—in a coterie of four—that they ought to admit Madame Rabourdin into their set, and Madame de Camps agreed with him. At the end of an hour the minister had become duly impressed; Madame Rabourdin's cleverness pleased him; she had already won over his wife, who, quite enchanted with the siren, had just invited her to come whenever she wished.

"For, my dear," said the minister's wife to Célestine, "your husband will soon be director; the minister intends uniting the two divisions and placing them under one director; you will then be one of us."

His Excellency gave Madame Rabourdin his arm and escorted her out of the room to show her a room of his apartments which had become famous on account of the supposed luxury which the opposition papers had reproached him with lavishing on it, and to demonstrate the absurdities of journalism.

"Truly, Madame, you must give us, the countess and myself, the pleasure of seeing you here often—"

And he tendered to her many compliments appropriate in a minister.

"But, Monseigneur," she replied, as she gave him one of those glances which women keep in reserve, "it seems to me that that depends upon you."

"How?"

"But you can give me that right."

"Explain your words."

"No. When I came here I said to myself that I would not have the bad taste to solicit anything."

"Speak! *Places sought in this way* are never *out of place*," said the minister, laughing.

There is nothing like these trifles for amusing serious men.

"Ah! well, it is ridiculous for the wife of a head-clerk to be seen here so often, whereas the wife of a director would not be *out of place*."

"Do not trouble yourself about that," said the minister, "your husband is an indispensable man; he is appointed."

"Are you speaking the strict truth?"

"Will you go to my office and see his nomination? The papers are all made out."

"Ah! well," she said, as she was seated in a corner alone with the minister, whose devotion was becoming very noticeable, "let me tell you that I can recompense you—"

She was about to divulge her husband's plan, when des Lupeaulx, who had come up on tip-toe, uttered an angry ejaculation, which meant that he did not wish to appear to have heard all that he had listened to. The minister threw an ill-humored glance at the old fop, taken in the trap. Impatient of conquest, des Lupeaulx had pressed, beyond measure, the work of the staff. He had carried the paper to the minister, and he desired to take the nomination the following morning to the woman who passed for his mistress. At this moment the minister's valet de chambre came in with a mysterious air, and said to des Lupeaulx that his valet de chambre had begged him to deliver this letter as

soon as possible, at the same time telling him of its great importance.

The secretary-general went near a lamp and read a note, thus worded:

Contrary to my custom, I am waiting in an antechamber, and there is not an instant to lose if you wish to come to terms with

Your obedient servant,

The secretary shuddered when he saw this signature, which it would be a pity not to give in autograph, for it is rare on 'Change, and would be very valuable for those who think they can read the character from the writing of a signature. If ever a hieroglyphic sign looked like any animal, it was assuredly this name, in which the first and the final letter made the outline of the voracious jaw of a shark, insatiable, always open, grasping, and devouring everything, both strong and weak. It has been found impossible to reproduce the hand-writing; it was too small, too minute, too cramped, although neat. This can be very well imagined when the sentence only took the space of one line. The spirit of usury alone could have inspired a sentence so insolently imperative and so cruelly irreproachable, so clear, and at the same time telling so little, saying everything and betraying nothing. If Gobseck had been unknown to you, at the sight of that

line which compelled one to go and yet was not an order, you would readily have divined the implacable money-lender of Rue des Grès. Thus, like a dog which the hunter has called, des Lupeaulx at once left the chase and went home, meditating his compromised position. Imagine a general-in-chief to whom his aide-de-camp has just said: "The enemy has been reinforced by thirty thousand fresh troops, and they are attacking us on our flank."

One word will explain the arrival of Messieurs Gigonnet and Gobseck on the field of battle,—for they were both at des Lupeaulx's residence. At eight o'clock that evening, Martin Falleix had come on the wings of the wind—thanks to three francs, to the guides and to the courier who went in advance—and had brought back with him the title-deeds dated the evening before. The securities, which Mitral took at once to the Café *Thémis*, had passed into the hands of the two usurers, who hastened to take them to the ministry, even going on foot. Eleven o'clock struck. Des Lupeaulx trembled when he saw the two sinister faces animated by a glance as direct as that of a pistol-shot, and as brilliant as the flash itself.

"Well, what is it, my masters?"

The usurers remained cold and motionless. Gigonnet pointed by turns to his documents and to the valet de chambre.

"Let us go into my study," said des Lupeaulx, dismissing his valet by a wave of his hand.

"You understand French perfectly," said Gigonnet.

"Have you come here to torment a man who has put it in the way of each of you to make two hundred thousand francs?" he said, as he involuntarily made a haughty gesture.

"And who will help us to make more, I hope," said Gigonnet.

"Some business?"—replied des Lupeaulx. "If you have need of me, I can remember."

"And as for us, we have your acccounts," answered Gigonnet.

"My debts will be paid," said des Lupeaulx, disdainfully, to prevent himself from being attacked.

"True?" said Gobseck.

"Come to the point, my son," said Gigonnet. "Do not pose like that, your chin down in your cravat; with us it is useless. Take these deeds and read them."

The two usurers took an inventory of des Lupeaulx's office while he read with amazement and stupefaction these deeds, which seemed to him to have been thrown from the clouds by angels.

"Do you not find us to be intelligent business men?" said Gigonnet.

"But to what do I owe such able co-operation?" said des Lupeaulx, anxiously.

"We knew a week ago a fact that without us you would only know to-morrow: the President of the Chamber of Commerce, a deputy, feels himself obliged to resign."

Des Lupeaulx's eyes dilated and grew as large as daisies.

"Your minister has been deceiving you about it," said the concise Gobseck.

"You are my masters," said the secretary-general, bowing with profound respect which amounted almost to mockery.

"True," said Gobseck.

"But do you wish to strangle me?"

"Possibly."

"Well, go to work, executioners!" said the secretary-general, smilingly.

"You see," replied Gigonnet, "your debts are registered with the money borrowed for the purchase."

"Here are the titles," said Gobseck, as he drew the legal documents from the pockets of his greenish overcoat.

"You shall have three years to pay up everything," said Gigonnet.

"But," said des Lupeaulx, frightened by so much consideration and by such a peculiar arrangement, "what do you want of me?"

"La Billardière's position for Baudoyer," said Gigonnet, quickly.

"That is a very little thing, although it will be next to impossible for me to accomplish it. My hands are tied," replied des Lupeaulx.

"Bite the cords with your teeth," said Gigonnet.

"They are sharp!" added Gobseck.

"Is that all?" said des Lupeaulx.

"We will keep the documents until your debts are paid," said Gigonnet, as he placed an account

under the eyes of the secretary-general; "if they are not acknowledged by the commission in six days, your name on this deed will be replaced by mine."

"You are shrewd," cried the secretary-general.

"True," said Gobseck.

"This is all?" said des Lupeaulx.

"True," said Gobseck.

"Do you agree to it?" asked Gigonnet.

Des Lupeaulx bowed.

"Well, sign this power of attorney," said Gigonnet. "In two days Baudoyer is to be nominated; in six your debts will be paid, and—"

"And what?" said des Lupeaulx.

"We will guarantee—"

"What?" said des Lupeaulx, more and more astonished.

"Your nomination," replied Gigonnet, with a tone of authority. "We will secure the majority with the vote of fifty-two farmers and mechanics, who will obey the one who lends you the money."

Des Lupeaulx pressed Gigonnet's hand.

"It is only between us that disputes are impossible," he said; "that is what might be called business! Besides, I will make you return the gift."

"True," said Gobseck.

"What is it?" asked Gigonnet.

"The Cross of the Legion of Honor for your imbecile nephew."

"Good," said Gigonnet; "you are well acquainted with him."

Then the usurers saluted des Lupeaulx, who escorted them to the stairs.

"They must be secret messengers from some foreign powers," said the two valets de chambre to each other.

Once in the street, the two usurers saw each other by the light of the street-lamp, and laughed.

"He will owe us nine thousand francs interest yearly, and the estate scarcely brings him in five, net," said Gigonnet.

"He is in our hands for some time," said Gobseck.

"He will build, he will commit follies," replied Gigonnet; "Falleix will get his land."

"His wish is solely to become deputy, the surly wolf laughs at the rest," said Gobseck.

"Hey! Hey!"

"Hey! Hey!"

These little dry exclamations made the two usurers laugh, as they wended their way on foot to the Café *Thémis*.

Des Lupeaulx returned to the drawing-room and found Madame Rabourdin under full sail; she was charming, and the minister, who was usually so sad, wore a smooth and gracious countenance.

"She works miracles," said des Lupeaulx. "What a valuable woman! I must fathom even to the depth of her heart."

"She is decidedly attractive, your little lady," said the marquise to the secretary-general; "she lacks but taking your name."

"Yes, her only misfortune is that she is the

daughter of an auctioneer. She will fail by the accident of birth," replied des Lupeaulx, with a cold manner, which was a great contrast to the ardor of his remarks about Madame Rabourdin a moment before.

The marquise regarded des Lupeaulx with a fixed expression.

"You threw them a look which has not escaped my observation," she said, looking toward the minister and Madame Rabourdin; "it pierced the glasses of your spectacles. You both furnish amusement by quarreling over that bone."

As the marquise passed out of the door, the minister ran toward her and brought her back.

"Well," said des Lupeaulx to Madame Rabourdin, "what do you think of our minister?"

"He is charming. Truly," she replied, raising her voice so as to be heard by the minister's wife. "These poor ministers should be known to be appreciated. The small newspapers and the calumnies of the opposition distort the characters of political men to such an extent that one is at last influenced by the articles; but these prejudices turn to their advantage when one sees the men themselves."

"He is very good looking," said des Lupeaulx.

"Well, I can assure you that he is lovable," she said, good-naturedly.

"Dear child," said des Lupeaulx, in his turn assuming a friendly and coaxing manner, "you have accomplished the impossible."

"What?" she said.

"You have brought the dead to life. I thought he had no heart; ask his wife! He has just enough to gratify a fancy: but let us turn it to your advantage. Come here. Do not be astonished."

He led Madame Rabourdin into the boudoir, and sat down on the sofa by her.

"You are very shrewd, and I love you more for it. Between ourselves, you are a superior woman. Des Lupeaulx has gained your admittance here, and that is all he is needed for; is it not so? Besides, when one makes up one's mind to love for selfish ends, it is better to take a sexagenarian minister than a quadragenarian secretary-general: there is more profit in it, and it is less tiresome. I am a man who wears spectacles, whose hair is turning gray, who is satiated with pleasure. What a fine picture of a lover! Oh! I have said that to myself! Although it may be necessary to admit that I am useful, I can never be agreeable; is that not so? One must be a dunce not to know how to reason about himself. You may tell me the truth, and show me the depth of your heart. We are two partners, and not two lovers. If I have sometimes shown a tenderness for you, you are too superior a woman to pay any attention to such nonsense, and you will forgive me, that is, if you have not the ideas of a young school-girl or of a bourgeoise of Rue Saint-Denis! Bah! We are better brought up than that, you and I. See, the Marquise d'Espard is leaving; do you believe that she does not reason thus? We came to an understanding

nearly two years ago—the flirt!—Ah, well! she has only to write me a word, a short line: *'My dear des Lupeaulx, you will oblige me by doing so and so!'* and it is done at once; we are just now trying to have her husband declared incapable of managing his own affairs. You women, it costs you only a few smiles to obtain what you want. Ah! well, then, turn the head of the minister, dear child; I will help you to do it; it is to my interest to do so. Yes, I wish that there might be a woman who could influence him. He would then not escape me; he escapes me now sometimes, and that can well be imagined; I only hold him by his reason; in connecting myself with a pretty woman, I would be able to hold him by his folly, and that is a stronger grasp. Thus let us remain good friends, and let us divide the advantages of the conquest you are making."

Madame Rabourdin listened in the greatest amazement to this singular profession of rascality. The artlessness of this crafty politician excluded every idea of surprise.

"Do you believe that he thinks of me?" she asked, caught in the trap.

"I know it, I am sure of it."

"Is it true that Rabourdin's nomination is signed?"

"I gave him the papers this morning. But it is nothing to be director; he ought to be maître de requêtes."—

"Yes," she said.

"Ah! well, re-enter the drawing-room and flirt with His Excellency."

"Truly, I have only really known you this evening. There is nothing commonplace about you."

"Well, then," des Lupeaulx replied, "we are two old friends, and we will suppress all tender sentiments, tiresome love-making, to take the question as it was taken under the Regency, when people were sufficiently clever."

"You are really strong, and you have my admiration," she said, as she smiled and stretched forth her hand. "You know that one will do more for one's friend than for one's—"

She re-entered the drawing room without finishing her sentence.

"Dear little one," said des Lupeaulx to himself, as he saw her approach the minister, "des Lupeaulx has no longer any remorse in turning against you! To-morrow evening, in offering me a cup of tea, you will be offering me what I no longer wish—all is over! Ah! When we are forty years old women can always entrap us, but we can no longer be loved."

He entered the drawing-room after having looked at himself from head to foot in the glass, and he recognized himself as a fine-looking politician, but perfectly incapacitated by the Cytherean Venus. At this moment Madame Rabourdin was collecting her ideas. She contemplated going, she wished to leave in the mind of each person present a last graceful impression, and she succeeded. Contrary

to the usual custom in drawing-rooms, every one exclaimed, after she had left: "That charming woman!" and the minister himself led her to the outer door.

"I am very sure that you will think of me to-morrow," he said, as he turned back, alluding to the nomination.—"So few of the wives of the high functionaries are agreeable, that I am delighted with this acquisition," said the minister, as he re-entered.

"Do you not find her a little encroaching?" said des Lupeaulx, with a piqued air.

The women present exchanged expressive glances, for the rivalry between the minister and his secretary-general amused them. Then took place one of those pretty comedies which Parisians know so well how to comprehend. The women encouraged the minister and des Lupeaulx to talk about Madame Rabourdin; one found her too affected and too anxious to appear clever; another compared the graces of the bourgeoisie with the manners of this high society, so as to criticise Célestine; and des Lupeaulx defended his supposed mistress as one would defend one's enemy in a drawing-room.

"Let us do her justice, ladies! Is it not extraordinary that the daughter of an auctioneer should appear so well! Look where she came from, and see where she is; she will go to the Tuileries; she intends to accomplish that; she told me as much."

"If she is the daughter of an auctioneer," said Madame d'Espard, smilingly, "how can that hinder her husband's advancement?"

"In these days, do you not mean?" said the minister's wife, biting her lips.

"Madame," said the minister to the marquise, sternly, "with such words—when unhappily the court spares no one—revolutions are brought about. You cannot imagine how much the thoughtless conduct of the aristocracy displeases certain clear-sighted personages at the palace. If I were a great lord, instead of a mere country-gentleman, who appears to be placed where he is to transact your business, the monarchy would not be so badly off as I see it now. What will become of a throne which does not share its dignity with those who represent it? We are far from the days when the king aggrandized men by the force of his will alone —such as Louvois, Colbert, Richelieu, Jeannin, Villeroy and Sully—yes, Sully, when he first became prominent was no greater than I. I speak to you thus because we are among ourselves, and that I really would amount to very little if I were offended by such trifles. It lies with ourselves, and not with others, whether or not we shall be great."

"You are appointed, my dear," said Célestine, as she pressed her husband's hand. "If des Lupeaulx had not prevented me I would have developed your plan to the minister; but I will do it next Tuesday, and you can thus all the sooner become maître de requêtes!"

In the life of all women, there is one day when they will appear at their very best, and this day leaves them an eternal memory to which they will

return with pleasure. When Madame Rabourdin took off, one by one, the ornaments of her apparel, she thought over the evening, and counted it as among her times of triumph and happiness: all her graces had been envied, she had been flattered by the minister's wife, who was glad to compare her with her friends. Above everything, all her vanities had shown to the profit of conjugal love. Rabourdin was nominated!

"Did I not look well this evening?" she said to her husband, just as though he needed stirring up.

At this moment, Mitral,—who was at the Café *Thémis*, awaiting the two usurers,—perceived them enter and saw no emotion depicted on these two immobile faces.

"How do we stand in regard to it?" he said to them when they were seated at table.

"Ah! well, same as ever," said Gigonnet, rubbing his hands,—"victory due to gold."

"True," said Gobseck.

Mitral took a hack and hunted up the Saillards and Baudoyers, who were still playing boston; but no one else was there except the Abbé Gaudron. Falleix, all but dead with fatigue, had gone to bed.

"You will be nominated, my nephew, and there is a surprise in reserve for you."

"What?" said Saillard.

"The Cross of the Legion of Honor!" said Mitral.

"God protects those who remember His altars!" said Gaudron.

Thus the *Te Deum* was sung in the two camps with equal joy.

The following day, Wednesday, Monsieur Rabourdin was to transact business with the minister, for he had filled the late La Billardière's place since the illness of the deceased. On these days the clerks were there on time, the office-boys were very attentive, for on such occasions, when documents were signed, all was excitement in the offices, and why? No one knew. The three servants were then at their posts, and anticipated a few fees, for the rumor of Monsieur Rabourdin's nomination had been spread abroad the evening before by des Lupeaulx. Uncle Antoine and the porter Laurent were there in full uniform when, at a quarter before eight, the secretary's servant came and begged Antoine to deliver privately to Monsieur Dutocq a letter that the secretary-general had told him to take to the principal clerk at seven o'clock.

"I do not know how it happened, my old fellow; I slept, I slept, and I have only just awakened. He would lead me the devil's dance if he knew that the letter had not been delivered ; whereas, as it is, I will say that I am positive that I carried it myself to Monsieur Dutocq's residence. A famous secret, Father Antoine, do not mention a word about it to the clerks; on your honor! he would dismiss me. I should lose my place should I utter a single word, so he said!"

"What can be inside this letter?" said Antoine.

"Nothing; I have looked through it, like that. See!"

And he made the letter gape open, and only blank paper could be seen.

"This is your great day, Laurent," said the secretary's office-boy; "you are going to have a new director. Undoubtedly, economy will be practised, the two divisions will be united under one director. Take care, boys."

"Yes, nine clerks will be dismissed," said Dutocq, who came in just then. "How did you hear that?"

Antoine presented the letter to Dutocq, who rushed down stairs, opened it, and ran to the secretary's office.

After having gossiped much since the death of de la Billardière, the two offices of Rabourdin and Baudoyer had resumed their accustomed aspect, and their habits of administrative *dolce far niente*. Nevertheless, the close of the year brought about a sort of studious application in the offices, just as servants become then more servile. Every one arrived punctually and a greater number remained after four o'clock,—for the distribution of fees depends upon the last impressions which one leaves on the chiefs at that season. The previous evening the rumor of the reunion of the two divisions of La Billardière and Clergeot, with one chief, under a new title, had agitated both divisions. The number of the clerks discharged was known, but their names were withheld. It was well conjectured that Poiret would not be replaced; they intended economizing by dispensing with his position. Little La Billardière had gone. Two new supernumeraries had arrived;

and, what was an alarming sign, they were the sons of deputies. The news told the previous evening in the offices, at the time the clerks were leaving, had filled their minds with terror. Thus for the first half-hour after their arrival they stood in groups around the stove and talked. But before any one arrived, Dutocq had seen des Lupeaulx at his toilet; and, without laying down his razor, the secretary-general had looked at him in the same manner that a general would have done in issuing an order.

"Are we alone?" he said to him.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, march on Rabourdin, forward and steady! You have no doubt kept a copy of his document?"

"Yes."

"You understand me: *Inde iræ!* There must be a general outcry. Try to invent something to raise a clamor—"

"I can get a caricature made of him, but I have not five hundred francs to give—"

"Who will make it?"

"Bixiou."

"He shall have a thousand francs, and shall be made assistant under Colleville, who will arrange with him."

"But he will not believe me."

"Do you wish to compromise me by an accident? Go, or else nothing, do you understand? If Monsieur Baudoyer were director, he might lend the sum—"

"Yes, he will be director. Leave me. Hurry,

and do not appear to have seen me; go down by the small stairway."

While Dutocq was returning to the clerk's office, his heart beat with joy, and he asked himself how he could excite the rumor against his chief, without compromising himself too much. Bixiou went to Rabourdin's office to wish the clerks good-day. This great joker, believing that he had lost the bet, found it agreeable to pose as having gained it.

BIXIOU—Imitating Phellion's voice.

"Gentlemen, I salute you by wishing you good-day, collectively. And I appoint next Sunday for a dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale;* but a serious question presents itself: What shall we do about asking the dismissed clerks?"

POIRET.

"And those who are about to retire."

BIXIOU.

"It is all the same to me, for it is not I who pays. —General consternation.—Baudoyer is appointed; I think I already hear him calling Laurent.—He mimicked Baudoyer.

'Laurent, lock up my hair-shirt and also my scourge'

They all roared with laughter.—*Ris d'aboyeur d'oie!* Colleville is right in his anagrams, for you know the anagram of Xavier Rabourdin, chief of bureau, is: *D'abord rêva bureaux, e, u, fin riche.* If I were named *Charles X., par la grace de Dieu, roi de France et de Navarre,* I should tremble at having the

sad fate that my anagram thus arranged would prophesy."

THUILLIER.

"Ah! you are joking!"

BIXIOU—laughing in his face.

"*Ris au laid* (rice with milk). That is pretty, that, Papa Thuillier, for you are not good-looking. Rabourdin resigns; he is so angry that Baudoyer should be appointed director."

VIMEUX—entering.

"What nonsense! Antoine, to whom I have just paid thirty or forty francs, told me that Monsieur and Madame Rabourdin were received yesterday at the private reception of the minister, and that they remained there until a quarter to twelve. His Excellency escorted Madame Rabourdin to the stairs. It seems she was divinely dressed. In short, there is no doubt that he is appointed director. Riffé, the secretary's copying-clerk, sat up all night to finish the papers as soon as possible; it is no longer a secret. Monsieur Clergeot has been retired. After thirty years of service, that is no disgrace. Monsieur Cochin, who is rich—"

BIXIOU.

"According to Colleville, he dealt in *cochineal.*"

VIMEUX.

"Why he is in the cochineal business, for he is a partner in the firm of Matifat, Rue des Lombards. Ah! well, he has been retired. Poiret has been

retired. Neither of them is replaced. That is certain; the rest is not yet known. The nomination of Monsieur Rabourdin is to be announced this morning; they are afraid of intrigues."

BIXIOU.

"What intrigues?"

FLEURY.

"Baudoyer's. Zounds! The clerical party upholds him; and see, here is a new article in the liberal journal; it only consists of two lines, but it is droll."—He reads.

"Certain persons spoke last night in the foyer of the Opera House of the return of Monsieur de Chateaubriand to the ministry, and settled on their choice of Monsieur Rabourdin—the protégé of the friends of the noble viscount—to fill the place which was first destined for Monsieur Baudoyer. The clerical party will scarcely withdraw unless in deference to the great writer."

"Rascals!"

DUTOCQ—entering after having heard everything.

"Who, a rascal? Rabourdin. So you have heard the news?"

FLEURY—rolling his savage eyes.

"Rabourdin!—a rascal? Are you mad, Dutocq, and do you want a ball in your brains to give them weight?"

DUTOCQ.

"I have said nothing against Monsieur Rabourdin; only it has just been secretly confided to me, in the court-yard, that he has denounced many of the clerks, taken notes, in fact; that his interest in the

ministries has been promoted by the work, in which each one of us is severely dealt with."

PHELLION—in a loud voice.

"Monsieur Rabourdin is incapable—"

BIXIOU.

"That is all right enough! Tell us then Dutocq?"

—They whispered a word to each other, and then went into the corridor.—

BIXIOU.

"What is going on, now?"

DUTOCQ

"Do you remember about the caricature?"

BIXIOU.

"Yes; well?"

DUTOCQ.

"Make it and you shall be chief-assistant and have an extraordinary salary. Do you see, my boy, there is discord in the higher ranks. The minister is pledged to Rabourdin; but if he does not appoint Baudoyer, he will get into trouble with the clergy. Do you not see? the King, the Dauphin and the Dauphiness, the Grand Almonry, in fact, the Court, wish Baudoyer, while the minister desires to appoint Rabourdin."

BIXIOU.

"Good—"

DUTOCQ.

"In order to bring about a reconciliation—for the minister has seen the necessity of giving way—he wishes to obviate the difficulty. An accusation

must be made which will result in Rabourdin's overthrow. For that purpose an old document of his has been unearthed, which he wrote on the administrations for the purpose of purifying them, and of which he has circulated some copies. At least this is how I succeeded in explaining matters to myself. Make the drawing and you will enter into the game with the highest dignitaries; you will at the same time serve the minister, the court, in fact everyone, and you will be appointed. Do you understand?"

BIXIOU.

"I do not understand how you came to know all that, or perhaps you invented it."

DUTOCQ.

"Do you wish me to show you the article about yourself?"

BIXIOU.

"Yes."

DUTOCQ.

"Very well, come to my house, for I must replace this document in safe hands."

BIXIOU.

"Go there alone.—He re-enters Rabourdin's office.—There can be no question in regard to what Dutocq has told you, word of honor. Monsieur Rabourdin must have given very unflattering accounts of the clerks he wished to reform. The secret of his elevation lies in this. We live in a time when no one is

astonished at anything.—He drapes his cloak after the fashion of Talma.

> 'You have seen the most illustrious heads fall,
> And you are astonished, senseless that you are!'

to find a case of this kind by favor of a man? My Baudoyer is too much of a fool to succeed by such means! Accept my congratulations, gentlemen; you are under an illustrious chief."—He departs.

POIRET.

"I will yet leave the ministry before I understand one word which that gentleman says. What does he mean by his heads that fall?"

FLEURY.

"Zounds! the four sergeants of la Rochelle, Berton, Ney, Caron, the brothers Faucher and all the massacres!"

PHELLION.

"He advances thoughtlessly on hazardous propositions."

FLEURY.

"Say, then, that he lies, that he is joking! and that, in his mouth, truth takes the form of verdigris."

PHELLION.

"Your words exceed the bounds of politeness and courtesy due to colleagues."

VIMEUX.

"It seems to me that, if what he says is false, the

proper name for it is calumny, defamation, and that one who defames should be horsewhipped."

FLEURY—becoming animated.

"And the government offices are public places; they should be under the supervision of the police-courts."

PHELLION—wishing to avert a quarrel, tries to turn the conversation.

"Gentlemen, calm yourselves. I am at work on a new little treatise on moral philosophy, and I am in the very midst of it—"

FLEURY—interrupting him.

"What are you saying about it, Monsieur Phellion?"

PHELLION—reading.

"Question.—*What is the soul of man?*"

"Answer.—*It is a spiritual substance which thinks and reasons.*"

THUILLIER.

"Answer.—*A spiritual substance, that is just the same as saying immaterial stone.*"

POIRET.

"Let him say on—"

PHELLION—continuing.

"Question.—*Whence comes the soul?*"

"Answer.—*It comes from God, who has created it of a simple and indivisible nature, which we consequently can not imagine as destructible, and He has said—*"

POIRET—stupefied.

"God?"

PHELLION.

"Yes, sir. The tradition is just what I have narrated."

FLEURY—to Poiret.

"Do not interrupt, yourself!"

PHELLION—resuming.

"*And He has said that He created it immortal; that is to say that it will never die.*"

"Question.—*Of what use is the soul?*"

"Answer.—*To comprehend, to will and to remember; these constitute judgment, volition, memory.*"

"Question.—*Of what use is understanding?*"

"Answer.—*To know. It is the eye of the soul.*"

FLEURY.

"And the soul is the eye of what?"

PHELLION—continuing.

"Question. — *What does the understanding know?*"

"Answer.—*Truth.*"

"Question. — *Why does man possess a will-power?*"

"Answer.—*In order to love good and to hate evil.*"

"Question.—*What is good?*"

"Answer.—*That which makes one happy.*"

VIMEUX.

"And you are writing that for the young ladies?"

PHELLION.

"Yes."—Continuing—"Question.—*How many kinds of good are there?*"

FLEURY.

"All this is trifling!"

PHELLION—Indignant.

"Oh! sir!—Calming himself—But here is the reply. I am writing it now."—He reads.

"Answer.—*There are two kinds of good, eternal good and temporal good.*"

POIRET—With a look of contempt.

"And it will have a great sale."

PHELLION.

"I dare to hope so. It is necessary to concentrate one's mind greatly to carry on a system of questions and answers; that is why I beg you to let me think, for the answers—"

THUILLIER—Interrupting.

"Besides, the answers might be sold separately—"

PHELLION.

"I have committed a great fault by interrupting you.—He dives his head into his portfolio; then continues to say to himself.—But now they will think no more about Rabourdin."

*

At this moment a scene was taking place between des Lupeaulx and the minister which decided Rabourdin's fate. Before breakfast the secretary-general went to seek His Excellency in his office, assuring himself that La Brière was not within hearing.

"Your Excellency does not play fairly with me—"

"We are, then, about to quarrel," thought the minister, "because his mistress flirted with me last evening. I thought you less of a child, my dear friend," he replied in a loud voice.

The minister gazed haughtily at des Lupeaulx.

"We are alone, and we can explain ourselves. The deputy of the district where *my estate* of des Lupeaulx is situated—"

"It is, then really an estate!" laughingly replied the minister, in order to hide his surprise.

"Increased by a recent purchase of two hundred thousand francs," des Lupeaulx replied, carelessly. "You knew the resignation of this deputy ten days ago; but you have not told me about it. You need not have done it, but you knew very well that I am exceedingly desirous of taking my seat in the Centre. Have you imagined that I am capable of throwing the weight of my influence in the politics which will work your destruction, yours and that of the

monarchy, if this party is allowed to recruit itself by taking in men of unrecognized abilities? Do you know that there are not more than fifty or sixty dangerous heads in a nation, whose abilities are in proportion to their ambitious schemes? To know how to govern, is to find these heads, so that they can be cut off or bought off. I do not know if I have any talent, but I am ambitious, and you are committing the fault of not being on good terms with a man who only wishes you well. The coronation dazzles for a moment, but what follows?—Then the war of words and discussions wil recommence more bitterly than ever. Ah! well, for your own sake, take care that you do not find me in the Left Centre, believe me! Notwithstanding the manœuvres of your prefect—who, doubtless, has heard some confidential instructions against me—I will have the majority. The moment has come for us to understand one another. After a slight falling out, people sometimes become all the better friends. I would be made count, and receive the grand cordon of the Legion of Honor for my services. But I care less for these two things than for one in which your interests are concerned.—You have not yet nominated Rabourdin. I have had news this morning; you will give more general satisfaction by appointing Baudoyer—"

"Appointing Baudoyer!" cried the minister. "Do you know him?"

"Yes," said des Lupeaulx; "but when his incapacity shall be proved, you can get rid of him by

begging his protectors to employ him themselves. You will thus gain for your friends an important post, and it may facilitate some transaction by getting rid of ambitious persons."

"I have promised it to Rabourdin!"

"Yes, but I do not ask you to change your mind this very day. I know the danger of saying yes and no in the same day. Postpone the nominations; you can sign them the day after to-morrow. Ah! well, the day after to-morrow, you must recognize that it is impossible to retain Rabourdin, from whom, moreover, you will receive a courteously and beautifully worded resignation."

"His resignation?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He is the tool of a secret power for which he has carried on a system of spying on a large scale in all the ministries, and this thing has been discovered by chance. Every one is speaking about it, and the clerks are furious. For goodness sake, do not transact business with him to-day. Let me find a way for you to dispense with him. Go to the king's palace. I am sure that you will find there many who will be pleased with your concession in regard to Baudoyer; you can obtain something as an equivalent. Then your position will be stronger later, when you dismiss this fool, because he will have been, so to speak, thrust upon you."

"Who has caused you to change thus on the score of Rabourdin?"

"Would you aid Monsieur de Chateaubriand in writing an article against the ministry? Ah! well, see how Rabourdin has treated me in his document," he said, as he gave his paper to the minister. "He would organize an entire government, without doubt in the interests of a party unknown to us. I will remain his friend, so that I can watch him; I believe I will be able to render some great service which will lead me to be made a peer, for the peerage is the only object of my desires. Know well, that I wish neither the ministry nor anything else, which might thwart your career; I am looking toward the peerage, which will enable me to marry some banker's daughter, with two hundred thousand francs income. So, permit me to render you some great service, which will cause to be said to the king that I have saved the throne. A long time ago I said: Liberalism will not offer us pitched battle. It has given up conspiracies, Carbonarism, and fighting with weapons; instead, it undermines and makes preparation to say: *"Out of this, that I may enter!"* Do you imagine that I have been courting Rabourdin's wife for my own pleasure? No, I have gained information! Thus there are two things to-day: the postponement of the appointment, and your *sincere* support of my election. You will see if, toward the end of the session, I shall not have liberally paid my debt to you."

The only answer the minister gave was that he took the report on the staff and handed it to des Lupeaulx.

"I will go and tell Rabourdin," said des Lupeaulx, "that you will put off the matter until Saturday."

The minister consented by a nod of his head. The secretary's office-boy soon hurried into the court-yard to Rabourdin's office to tell him that the matter was postponed until Saturday, a day when the Chamber of Deputies would only be occupied considering petitions, and when the minister would have the entire day free. Just at this moment, Saillard was saying his sentence to the minister's wife, who replied to him, with dignity, that she never interfered with affairs of state, and that, moreover, she had heard it said that Rabourdin had been appointed. Saillard, terrified, rushed up to Baudoyer's office, where he found Dutocq, Godard and Bixiou in a state of exasperation difficult to describe, for they were reading the terrible paper which Rabourdin had written about the clerks.

BIXIOU—putting his finger on a passage.

"Here is as to you, Papa Saillard:—'SAILLARD. The cashier to be done away with in all the ministries, and the account of their current expenses given over to the treasury. Saillard is rich and has no need of a pension.' Do you want to see what is said about your son-in-law?—He turns the page.—See: 'BAUDOYER. Totally incapable. To be retired without pension because he is rich.' And see what is stated about Godard!—He turns a new leaf.—'GODARD. To be dismissed! A pension of one-third of his salary.' In short, we are all mentioned in this article. As for me, I am described as 'an artist to be

employed by the civil list, at the Opera, at the Menus-Plaisirs, or the Museum. A great deal of ability, but very little stability; incapable of applying himself, and of a restless disposition.' Ah! I will let you have a taste of my artistic abilities!"

SAILLARD.

"To suppress the cashiers? What a monster!"

BIXIOU.

"What does he say about our mysterious Desroys?"—He turn another leaf and reads: 'DESROYS. A dangerous man, inasmuch as he cannot be moved from his principles, which are directly opposed to monarchical power. He is the son of a *Conventionnel*, and so he admires the Convention. He may become a very dangerous publicist.'"

BAUDOYER.

"The police are not so clever as he!'

GODARD.

"I shall go to the secretary-general and enter a formal complaint; we shall all have to resign *en masse* if such a man is appointed."

DUTOCQ.

"Listen to me, gentlemen! Be prudent. If you rise up at once, we shall be accused of vengeance and self-interested motives! No, let the news spread abroad quietly. When the entire administration is aroused, the step you take will meet with general approval."

BIXIOU.

"Dutocq believes in the principles of the great air composed by the sublime Rossini for *Basilio*, which proved that this great composer is a politician! That seems to me to be just and reasonable. I intend to leave my card at Monsieur Rabourdin's to-morrow morning, and I shall only have BIXIOU engraved on it; then, instead of a title I shall write, underneath, this quotation from his article about me: *very little stability, incapable of applying himself and of a restless disposition.*"

GODARD.

"A good idea, gentlemen. Let us all have our cards engraved with his sentiments about us, and leave them at Rabourdin's to-morrow morning."

BAUDOYER.

"Monsieur Bixiou, suppose you take charge of this little detail, and make the engraver destroy the plates after taking the first proof."

DUTOCQ—taking Bixiou apart.

"Very well; will you design the caricature now?"

BIXIOU.

"I understand, my dear, that you have been in this secret for the last ten days.—He looked into the whites of his eyes.—Will I be chief-assistant?"

DUTOCQ.

"On my word of honor, and a thousand francs

bonus you will have, just as I have told you. You do not know what service you are rendering to these powerful personages."

BIXIOU.

"You know them, then?"

DUTOCQ.

"Yes."

BIXIOU.

"Ah! well! I would like to speak to them."

DUTOCQ—dryly.

"Make the caricature or else do not make it, as you wish; you will in one case be deputy-chief, in the other case, not."

BIXIOU.

"Ah, well! Let us see the thousand francs!"

DUTOCQ.

"I will give them to you when the design is completed."

BIXIOU.

"Forward! That caricature shall go the rounds of the offices to-morrow. Let us go and *tease* the Rabourdins.—Speaking to Saillard, to Godard, and to Baudoyer, who are talking together in a low voice.—We are going to inform the neighbors.—He goes out with Dutocq and walks to Rabourdin's office. On his approach, Fleury, Thuillier, and Vimeux talk in a more animated manner.—Ah! well, what is the matter, gentlemen? What I have told you is so true, that you can see the proof of the most infamous of accusations at the office of the virtuous, honest, estimable, upright and

pious Baudoyer, who certainly is quite incapable, at least, of doing anything of that description. Your chief has invented a kind of guillotine for the clerks, that is certain; go and see, follow the crowd; you need not pay if not satisfied, you will enjoy your misfortune, GRATIS! The appointments are also postponed. All the offices are talking about it, and Rabourdin has just been informed that the minister will not work with him to-day.—Let us go now!"

Phellion and Poiret lived alone. The first thought too much of Rabourdin to hasten to give credence to any tale which would destroy a man whom he did not wish to judge; the second had only five days more to remain in office. At this moment Sébastien came down to hunt for those whom he expected to sign the papers. He was astonished enough, though he did not show it, on finding the office deserted.

PHELLION.

"My young friend—He arose, which was rather unusual.—do you know what is occurring, what means all this talk about, Monsieur Rabourdin, whom you love and—He lowered his voice and approached the ear of Sébastien.—whom I love as much as I esteem? It is said that he has committed the imprudence of leaving a work treating of the clerks, lying carelessly about.—At these words Phellion stops; he is obliged to sustain in his strong arms, young Sébastien, who becomes as pale as a white rose and faints in the chair.—Put a key down his back, Monsieur Poiret! Have you a key?"

POIRET.

"I always have that of my domicile." The old Poiret Junior put his key down Sébastien's back, while Phellion made him drink a glass of cold water. The poor youth only opened his eyes to weep violently. He rested his head on Phellion's desk, overwhelmed; his body was as limp as though struck by lightning, and his sobs were so penetrating, so genuine, so frequent, that Poiret was, for the first time in his life, moved by another's suffering; then, —speaking in a louder voice—he said, "Come, my young friend, take courage! On such great occasions, it is necessary. You are a man. What is the matter? Why should this move you so terribly?"

SÉBASTIEN—between his sobs.

"It is through me that Monsieur Rabourdin is lost! I left the document that I copied; I have killed my benefactor. I shall die of it.—Such a great man! a man who would have been minister!"

POIRET—blowing his nose.

"It is then true that he wrote reports?"

SÉBASTIEN—between his sobs.

"But it was to—let me stop, for I was just now about to tell his secrets! Ah! that wretch of a Dutocq! It is he who stole it—"

He recommenced to weep and sob so frantically that Rabourdin, in his office, heard the noise, recognized the voice and hurried up stairs. The

chief found Sébastien almost in a fainting condition, like a Christ, resting in the arms of Phellion and Poiret, who represented rather grotesquely the attitude of the two Marys, and whose faces were contracted by emotion.

RABOURDIN.

"What is the matter, gentlemen?"—Sébastien rises to his feet and then kneels before Rabourdin.

SÉBASTIEN.

"I have been the cause of your ruin, sir! The document; Dutocq, the monster, he has doubtless taken it."

RABOURDIN—calmly.

"I knew it.—He raises Sébastien and leads him out.—You are a child, my friend.—He addresses Phellion.—Where are these gentlemen?"

PHELLION.

"Sir, they have gone into Monsieur Baudoyer's office to see a paper which it is said—"

RABOURDIN.

"Enough."—He goes out, taking Sébastien with him. Poiret and Phellion look at each other in the greatest surprise and do not know what to say.

POIRET—to Phellion.

"Monsieur Rabourdin!—"

PHELLION—to Poiret.

"Monsieur Rabourdin!"

POIRET.

"For example, Monsieur Rabourdin!—"

PHELLION.

"Have you seen how, notwithstanding all this, he remained calm and dignified—"

POIRET—with a cunning expression which resembled a grimace.

"I would not be surprised if there was something beneath that."

PHELLION.

"A man of honor; pure and stainless—"

POIRET.

"And this Dutocq?"

PHELLION.

"Monsieur Poiret, your opinion of Dutocq is the same as mine; do you not understand me?"

POIRET—striking his head two or three times.

"Yes."—All the clerks now enter.

FLEURY.

"A severe blow! and even after having read it I cannot believe it. Monsieur Rabourdin,—the king of men!—My faith, if there are spies among such men, it is enough to disgust one with virtue. I placed Rabourdin among Plutarch's heroes."

VIMEUX.

"Oh! it is true!"

POIRET—reflecting that he is only to remain in office five days.

"But, gentlemen, what do you say about the man who stole the paper, who laid the trap for Monsieur Rabourdin?"—Dutocq left the room.

FLEURY.

"He is a Judas Iscariot! Who is he?"

PHELLION—significantly.

"Surely he is not among us."

VIMEUX—with animation.

"It is Dutocq."

PHELLION.

"I have not seen the proof, sir. While you were absent, this young man, Monsieur de la Roche, very nearly died.—Look, see his tears on my desk!—"

POIRET.

"We held him fainting in our arms—and the key of my house! My, my, it is still down his back."—Poiret goes out.

VIMEUX.

"The minister did not wish to transact business with Monsieur Rabourdin to-day; and Monsieur Saillard, to whom the chief-of-staff has said a few words, came to tell Baudoyer to apply for the Cross of the Legion of Honor. On New Year's Day there is one accorded to the division, and that one is given to Monsieur Baudoyer. Do I make it clear? Monsieur Rabourdin is sacrificed by the very clerks who make use of him. That is what Bixiou says. We were all to be dismissed, except Phellion and Sébastien."

DU BRUEL—entering.

"Well, gentlemen, is it true?"

THUILLIER.

"To the last syllable."

DU BRUEL—putting on his hat.

"Adieu, gentlemen."—He goes out.

THUILLIER.

"He finds no amusement in brilliant repartee, the vaudevillist! He goes to the Duc de Rhétoré, to the Duc de Maufrigneuse, but he may run! It is said that Colleville will be our chief."

PHELLION.

"He nevertheless seemed to love Môsieur Rabourdin."

POIRET—re-entering.

"I have had a world of trouble to get back the key of my domicile! That boy is bathed in tears, and Monsieur Rabourdin has disappeared completely."—Dutocq and Bixiou enter.

BIXIOU.

"Well, gentlemen, strange things happen in your office! Du Bruel!—He looks in his private office.—Gone?"

THUILLIER.

"Out on business."

BIXIOU.

"And Rabourdin?"

FLEURY.

"Disappeared, distilled! *a gone coon!* To say that a man, the king of men!—"

POIRET—to Dutocq.

"In his sorrow, Monsieur Dutocq, the little Sébastien accuses you of having taken the paper ten days ago—"

BIXIOU—looking at Dutocq.

"You must clear yourself from this reproach, my friend."—All the clerks look steadily at Dutocq.

DUTOCQ.

"Where is he, this little asp, who copied it?"

BIXIOU.

"How do you know that he copied it? My dear friend, only a diamond will polish a diamond!"—Dutocq goes.

POIRET.

"Listen, Monsieur Bixiou, I have only five and a-half days to remain in office, and I wish for once, if only for once, to have the pleasure of understanding what you mean! Be so kind as to explain in what way a diamond would be useful in this case."—

BIXIOU.

"That means, papa, for I wish, for once, to descend to your level, that just as it takes a diamond to cut a diamond, so it takes a spy to catch a spy."

FLEURY.

"A spy is put here to spy."

POIRET.

"I do not understand—"

BIXIOU.

"Well, let it be for another time."

Monsieur Rabourdin ran to the minister's house. The minister was at the Chamber of Deputies. Rabourdin presented himself at the Chamber of Deputies, where he wrote a message to the minister. The minister was in the tribune, engaged in a heated discussion. Rabourdin waited, not in the conference hall, but in the court-yard, and decided, notwithstanding the cold, to take a position in front of His Excellency's carriage, so that he could speak to him as he entered. The usher told him that the minister was engaged in the midst of a controversy raised by the nineteen members of the extreme Left, and that there was a stormy session. Rabourdin walked up and down the length of the palace court-yard—a prey to feverish agitation—and there he waited for five mortal hours. At half-past six o'clock the people began to file out; but the minister's footman came up to hunt for the coachman.

"Hi! Jean," he called, "Monseigneur has gone off with the minister of war; they are going to the king's, and afterwards they will dine together. We are to go for him at ten o'clock. There is to be a meeting of the Council."

Rabourdin walked slowly home, in a state of despondency which can readily be imagined. It was seven o'clock, and he had scarcely time to dress.

"Well, you are appointed," said his wife to him joyously, as he entered the parlor.

Rabourdin raised his head in a very melancholy way, and replied:

"I have good cause to fear that I shall never more set foot in the ministry."

"What!" said his wife, agitated by extreme anxiety.

"My memorandum on the officials has gone the rounds of the offices, and I have found it impossible to see the minister."

Célestine had a rapid vision, in which, by one of those infernal flashes, the demon showed her the meaning of her last conversation with des Lupeaulx.

"If I had conducted myself like a common woman," she thought, "we would have had the position."

She looked at Rabourdin with sorrow. Silence fell upon them both, and dinner passed amid mutual meditations.

"And this is our Wednesday reception!" she said.

"Everything is not lost, my dear Célestine," said Rabourdin, as he kissed his wife's forehead. "Perhaps I can speak to the minister to-morrow, when everything will be explained. Sébastien has spent all last night in finishing and arranging the copies, and I shall beg the minister to read them, by placing them all on his desk. La Brière will assist me. A man is never condemned without first being heard."

"I am curious to know if Monsieur des Lupeaulx will call on us to-day."

"He?—Surely he will not be absent," said Rabourdin. "There is a tiger in him; he loves to lick the blood of the wound he has made!"

"My poor dear," replied his wife, as she took his hand, "I do not know why the man capable of conceiving so noble a reform did not see that it ought not to be communicated to any one. It is one of those ideas that a man keeps to himself, for he alone can apply it. You must do in your sphere as Napoléon did in his; he yielded, writhed, cringed! Yes, Bonaparte cringed! To be made general-in-chief, he married Barras's mistress. You should have waited, got yourself appointed deputy, followed the waves of politics, sometimes at the depths of the sea, then again on the top of the waves, and you, like Monsieur de Villèle, should take the Italian motto: *Col tempo*, which translated means: *Everything comes to him who waits.* That orator sought for the power during seven years; he began in 1814 by making a protestation against the Charter at the same age you are now. See your fault! You are kept down, when you are born to rule."

The entrance of the painter, Schinner, imposed silence on the wife and her husband, whom these words set meditating.

"Dear friend," said the painter, as he pressed the administrator's hand, "the devotion of an artist is very useless to you, but, under these circumstances, we remain faithful, we artists! I have bought the evening journal. Baudoyer is nominated

director and decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor—"

"I am the longest there, for I have been in the service twenty-four years," said Rabourdin, smilingly.

"I am well enough acquainted with the Count de Sérizy, the Minister of State; if you wish him to come to your assistance, I can go to see him," said Schinner.

The drawing-room was soon filled with people to whom the government proceedings were unknown. Du Bruel did not come. Madame Rabourdin redoubled her gaiety and her gracefulness, like a horse, which, wounded in battle, still finds strength to carry his master.

"She is exceedingly brave," said some women, who were very polite to her, knowing her misfortunes.

"She has, however, done a great deal to attract des Lupeaulx," said the Baronne de Châtelet to the Vicomtesse de Fontaine.

"Do you think that—?" asked the vicomtesse.

"But Monsieur Rabourdin should at least have had the Cross of the Legion of Honor!" said Madame de Camps, defending her friend.

About eleven o'clock des Lupeaulx appeared, and the best way to describe him is to say that his spectacles were sad and his eyes gay, but the glasses hid the expression of his eyes so effectively that it would have required a physiognomist to discover their diabolical expression. He went up to press

Rabourdin's hand, who was forced to let him take it.

"We have much to talk over together," he said, as he seated himself near the beautiful Madame Rabourdin, who received him admirably.—"Eh!" he said, throwing her a side glance, "you are a grand woman, and I find you just what I imagined, sublime in defeat. Do you know that it is very rare that one finds a superior woman, one who fulfils the idea formed of her? Does not the defeat dishearten you? You are right; we shall triumph," he whispered in her ear. "Your fate is always in your hands, while you have for an ally a man who adores you. We will take counsel together—"

"But is not Baudoyer appointed?" she asked.

"Yes," said the secretary-general.

"Has he received the decoration?"

"Not yet; but he will."

"Ah, well!"

"You do not understand politics."

During this evening, which seemed eternal to Madame Rabourdin, another scene was occurring in the Place Royale—one of those comedies which are played in seven drawing-rooms in Paris at every change of ministry. Saillard's salon was crowded. Monsieur and Madame Transon arrived at eight o'clock; Madame Transon embraced Madame Baudoyer, née Saillard. Monsieur Bataille, captain of the National Guard, came accompanied by his wife and the Curate of Saint-Paul.

"Monsieur Baudoyer," said Madame Transon, "I

wish to be the first to congratulate you. Your talents have been appreciated; you have well earned your promotion!"

"And you are really director," said Monsieur Transon, rubbing his hands; "that is very flattering to this district."

"And we can truly say that it has been accomplished without any intrigue," said Papa Saillard. "We are none of us intriguers! We never frequent the select evenings at the minister's!"

Uncle Mitral rubbed his nose and smiled. He looked at his niece, Élisabeth, who was talking with Gigonnet. Falleix did not know what to think of the obtuseness of Papa Saillard and Baudoyer. Messieurs Dutocq, Bixiou, Du Bruel, Godard and Colleville—who was appointed chief—entered.

"What a set!" said Bixiou to Du Bruel; "what a fine caricature they would make drawn as gold-fish, dolphins and *claquarts*—the vulgar name for shell-fish—all dancing a sarabande!"

"Director," said Colleville, "I come to congratulate you, or rather we congratulate ourselves that we have you at the head of the direction, and we have come to assure you of the zeal with which we will co-operate with you in your work."

Monsieur and Madame Baudoyer, father and mother of the new director, were present, rejoicing in the honors which their son and daughter-in-law had gained. Uncle Bidault, who had dined at home, had a somewhat impatient air, which worried Bixiou.

"There is one!" said the artist to Du Bruel, as he pointed out Gigonnet, "there is one who would make a good character in a vaudeville! How much can he be got for? Such a scarecrow as he ought to serve as the sign of the *Deux Magots*. And what an overcoat! I thought that Poiret was the only one who could show such a one as this after ten years' exposure to the inclemencies of Paris weather."

"Baudoyer is magnificent," said Du Bruel.

"Dazzling," answered Bixiou.

"Gentlemen," said Baudoyer, addressing them, "here is my own uncle, Monsieur Mitral, and my great-uncle, on my wife's side, Monsieur Bidault."

Gigonnet and Mitral threw a penetrating glance at the three clerks, which left the impression of wealth, and so awed the two laughers.

"Hey!" said Bixiou, when they had gained the interior of the arcades of the Place Royale, "did you take a good look at those two uncles? Two copies of Shylock. They lend, I bet, in the market their money at a hundred per cent a week. They lend on security, they sell coats, gold-lace, cheese, women and children; they are Arabs-German-Jews-Genoese-Greeks-Genevese-Lombards and Parisians, suckled by a wolf, and born of a Turkish mother."

"I also think that Uncle Mitral used to be a sheriff's officer," said Godard.

"Do you understand?" said Du Bruel.

"I am going to see the proof of my caricature,"

Bixiou replied, "but I want very much to study what is going on in Madame Rabourdin's drawing-room: you are very fortunate to be privileged to go there, Du Bruel."

"I?" said the vaudevillist. "What do you wish me to do there? My face does not lend itself to expressions of condolence. Besides, it is very vulgar nowadays to go and see people who are down."

By midnight, Madame Rabourdin's drawing-room was deserted; there only remained two or three persons, des Lupeaulx and the host and hostess. After Schinner and Monsieur and Madame Octave de Camps had left, des Lupeaulx arose with a mysterious air, placed his back to the clock and looked by turns at the wife and her husband.

"My friends," he said, "nothing is lost, for the minister and I remain on your side. Dutocq, placed between two powers, has chosen the side he thought the stronger. He has served the Grand Almonry and the court, he has betrayed me; that is in the nature of things; a politician never complains of treachery. Even Baudoyer will be dismissed in a few months, and will doubtless be placed in the prefecture of police, for the Grand Almonry will not desert him."

Then he delivered a long speech about the Grand Almoner and the dangers the government ran in relying upon the church, upon the Jesuits, etc. But it is not useless to observe that the court and the Grand Almonry, to whom the liberal journals accorded an enormous influence over the administration,

were very little concerned in the Baudoyer affair. These petty intrigues died in the high sphere in the presence of the great interests which were at stake. If a few words were extracted by importunity from the Curate of Saint-Paul and Monsieur Gaudron, the application would be killed by the first remark of the minister. Passions, alone, would detect any wrong in the Society of Jesuits by inducing the members to denounce each other.—The occult power of this association, readily permitted in presence of the bold society of the doctrine entitled "Heaven helps him who helps himself," became formidable only through the action with which its subordinates, in a spirit of emulation, endowed it gratuitously while threatening each other with it. The liberal scandal lovers delighted in representing the Grand Almonry as a political, administrative, civil and military giant. Fear always makes for itself idols. At this moment, Baudoyer had firm faith in the Grand Almonry, while in reality the only almoner who had furthered his interests was seated in the Café *Thémis*. At certain periods there are names, institutions and powers on whom all misfortunes are fastened, whose talents are not appreciated, and who serve as co-efficient reasoning to fools. Just as Monsieur de Talleyrand was supposed to hail every event by a bon mot, so, in this time of the Restoration, the Grand Almonry ordered and countermanded everything. Unhappily, it did not do or undo anything. Its influence was neither in the hands of a Cardinal Richelieu nor a

Cardinal Mazarin; but in the hands of a sort of Cardinal de Fleury, who hesitated during five years, then one day made a bold stroke, which, however, was in the wrong direction. Later, the doctrine did with impunity at Saint-Merri more than Charles X. pretended to do in July, 1830. Without the article on the censorship so foolishly inserted in the new charter, journalism would also have had its Saint-Merri. The Younger Branch would have legally executed the plans of Charles X.

"Remain chief of bureau under Baudoyer, have that much courage," des Lupeaulx replied; "be a true politician; thrust aside generous thoughts and actions, absorb yourself in your official duties; do not say a word to your director, give him no advice, do nothing without an order from him. In three months, Baudoyer will be obliged to leave the ministry; he will either be dismissed or transported to another administrative shore. Perhaps he will be given a place in the king's household. Twice in my life it has happened that I have been thus crushed under an avalanche of foolery. I have let it pass over me."

"Yes," said Rabourdin, "but you were not calumniated, your honor was not attacked, compromised."

"Ah! ah! ah!" said des Lupeaulx, interrupting the head of the office with Homeric laughter, "but that is the daily bread of every remarkable man in this beautiful country of France; and there are two

ways of meeting it; to succumb to it by packing up and retiring to the country, or to rise above it and march forward, fearlessly, not even turning your head."

"For me, there is but one way of untying the slip-knot which espionage and treason have placed around my neck," Rabourdin replied, "and that is to offer an immediate explanation to the minister, and if you are as sincerely attached to me as you say, you will place me face to face with him to-morrow."

"You wish to explain to him your plan of administration?"

Rabourdin bowed in assent.

"Well, then, confide to me your plans, your memoranda, and I swear to you that he will pass the night examining them."

"Let us go to him, then," quickly replied Rabourdin, "for it is the least that can be expected that, after six months of work on my part, I should have the satisfaction of possessing two or three hours, when the king's minister might be forced to give his approval of all this perseverance."

Compelled by Rabourdin's tenacity to no longer beat about the bush where his ruse might have taken shelter, des Lupeaulx hesitated for a moment and regarded Madame Rabourdin while he said to himself:

"Which will win, my hatred for him or my liking for her?"

"If you have no confidence in me," he said to the chief of the office, after a pause, "I see that for

me you will always be the man who keeps his own counsel. Adieu, Madame."

Madame Rabourdin bowed coldly. Célestine and Xavier retired, going their separate ways, without saying a word, so much were they oppressed by misfortune. The wife dreamed of the dreadful situation in which she stood toward her husband. The chief of the bureau, who was making up his mind never again to put his foot in the ministry, and resolving to send in his resignation, was lost in the magnitude of his reflections. This meant that he would have to change his life and follow some new pursuit. He remained all night before his fire, without perceiving Célestine, who came in several times on tip-toe, in her night-dress.

"As I must go one last time to the ministry to bring away my papers and to assist Baudoyer to become acquainted with the routine, let us try the effect of my resignation," he said to himself.

He wrote his resignation, and thought out the phraseology of the letter containing it, which is as follows:

"Monseigneur: I have the honor to enclose to Your Excellency my resignation in this envelope; but I dare to believe that you remember having heard me say that I have placed my honor in your hands, and that that honor depends upon an immediate explanation. I have vainly sought it, and now it may perhaps be useless, for a fragment of my work relating to the administration, stolen and distorted, is going the rounds of the offices, is interpreted amiss by malice, and forces me to retire before the tacit condemnation of those in

power. Your Excellency may have thought that on the morning I wished to speak to you, I sought promotion, when, in reality, I sought only the glory of your ministry and the public good. It is important that I should rectify your impression in this matter."

Then followed the usual forms of respect.

*

It was half-past seven, when this man had consummated the sacrifice of his ideas, for he had burned his whole work. Fatigued by his reflections, and overcome by nervous strain, he fell asleep, his head resting on his arm-chair. He was awakened by a curious sensation; he found that his hands were covered by the tears of his wife, who was kneeling before him. Célestine had just read the resignation. She had measured the depth of his fall. She and Rabourdin would now be reduced to an income of four thousand francs. She had summed up her debts, and they amounted to thirty-two thousand francs! This was the most ignoble of all disasters. And that noble and confiding man had no idea how she had misspent the fortune confided to her care. She was sobbing at his feet, as beautiful as Magdalen.

"Our unhappiness is complete," said Xavier, in his terror; "I am dishonored before the ministry, and dishonored—"

The light of pure honor shone in Célestine's eyes, she sprang up like a startled horse, and cast a withering glance at Rabourdin.

"I! *I!*" she said, in two sublime tones. "Am I a common woman? Would you not have been appointed if I had been false? But," she added, "it is easier to believe that than the truth."

"What is it?" said Rabourdin.

"All can be told in two words," she replied. "We owe thirty thousand francs."

Rabourdin seized his wife with a fond gesture, and seated her joyfully on his knee.

"Console yourself, my dear," he said, in a tone of voice so exceedingly kind as to change the bitterness of her tears into inexpressible tenderness. "I, too, I have committed faults! I have worked to no purpose for my country, or at least I thought that I was making myself useful to it.—Now I am going to walk along another path. If I had sold groceries, instead, we would have been millionaires. Ah, well, let us be grocers. You are only twenty-eight years old, my angel! Well, ten years from now, industry will bring you the luxury you love so well, and which we must renounce for awhile. I, also, dear child, I am not an ordinary husband. We will sell our farm! It has gained in value these seven years. This increased value added to the sale of our furniture will pay *my* debts."

She embraced her husband a thousand times in a single kiss, for having spoken so generously to her.

"We will have," he replied, "a hundred thousand francs to put into some business. In less than a month I shall have chosen some enterprise. Fate, which gave Saillard a Martin Falleix, will not desert us. Wait breakfast for me. I will return from the ministry with my neck free from the yoke of misery."

Célestine pressed her husband in her arms with

a force which men do not possess even in their most impassioned moments, for woman is stronger in her emotions than man is by his power. She wept, laughed, sobbed and spoke altogether.

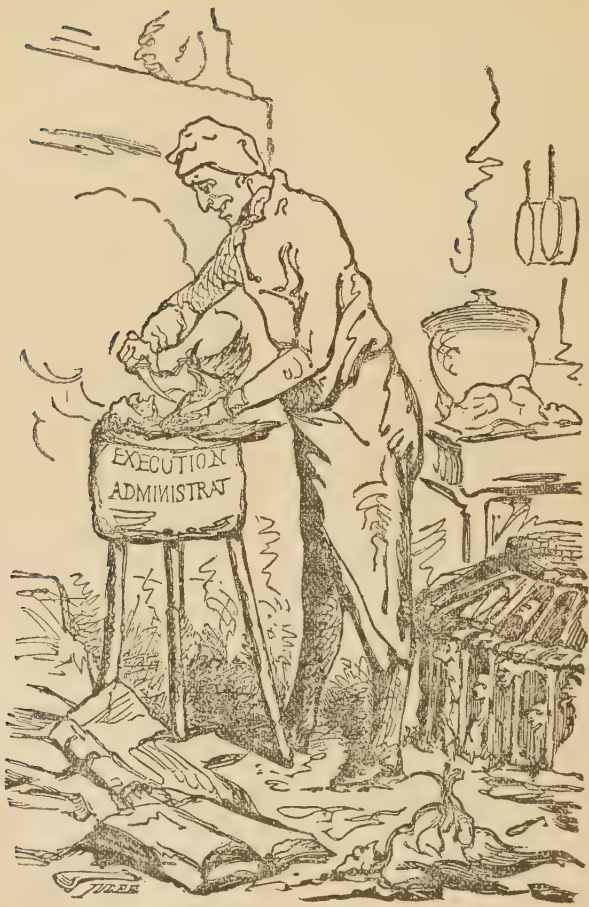
When Rabourdin departed at eight o'clock, the porter handed him the satirical cards of Baudoyer, Bixiou, Godard and others. Nevertheless he went to the ministry and found Sébastien waiting for him at the door, for the purpose of entreating him not to enter the offices, where an infamous caricature of him was going the rounds.

"If you wish to sweeten the bitterness of my fall, bring me this drawing," he said, "for I am now carrying my resignation myself to Ernest de la Brière, so that it will not be distorted while passing through the administrative routine. I have my own reasons for asking you for the caricature."

When, after making sure that the letter was in the hands of the minister, Rabourdin returned to the court-yard, he found Sébastien in tears, and he presented him (Rabourdin) with the lithograph, the principal feature of which can be seen on the next page.

"It is very cleverly done," said Rabourdin, while presenting a serene front toward the supernumerary, just as the Saviour did when the crown of thorns was placed upon His head.

He entered the offices with a calm air, and went first to Baudoyer's office to beg him to come in the office of the division to receive from him the instructions relative to the business that this man of routine was henceforth to direct.


EXECUTION
ADMINISTRAT

"Tell Monsieur Baudoyer that this brooks no delay," he added, before Godard and his clerks; "my resignation is in the hands of the minister, and I do not wish to remain even five minutes longer than necessary in the offices!"

Perceiving Bixiou, Rabourdin went straight up to him, showed him the lithograph, and, to the great astonishment of everyone, said to him: "Am I not right in saying you are an artist? It is only a pity that you have directed the point of your pencil against a man who cannot be judged in this way, nor by the administrative bureaus,—but everything causes a laugh in France, even God!"

Then he led Baudoyer into the office of the late La Billardière. At the door were Phellion and Sébastien, the only ones who, in this particularly distressing crisis, had dared to remain openly faithful to the accused. Rabourdin saw that Phellion's eyes were wet, and he could not withstand pressing his hand.

"Sir," said the good man, "if we can be of service to you in any way, make use of us—"

"Enter, then, my friends," said Rabourdin, with a noble grace.—"Sébastien, my child, write your resignation and send it by Laurent; you should be enveloped in the calumny which has overturned me. But I shall have a care over your future; we shall not be separated."

Sébastien was bathed in tears.

Monsieur Rabourdin shut himself up in the late La Billardière's office with Monsieur Baudoyer, and

Phellion assisted him in placing before the new chief of division all the administrative difficulties. At each package of papers which Rabourdin explained, at each portfolio opened, Baudoyer's small eyes grew as large as saucers.

"Adieu, sir," Rabourdin said at last, with a manner both solemn and satirical.

Meanwhile, Sébastien had made a parcel of the papers belonging to the chief of the office, and had taken them off in a cab. Rabourdin passed out through the minister's large court-yard, where all the clerks were at the windows; he waited there a moment for orders from the minister. The minister did not move. Phellion and Sébastien accompanied Rabourdin. Phellion bravely escorted the fallen man to Rue Duphot, and showed him a respectful admiration. Then he returned, satisfied with himself, and took his place, after having paid the funeral honors to unappreciated administrative talent.

BIXIOU—seeing Phellion enter.

"*Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*"

PHELLION.

"Yes, sir."

POIRET.

"What does that mean?"

FLEURY.

"That the priests' party has triumphed, and that Monsieur Rabourdin has the respect of men of honor."

DUTOCQ—piqued.

"You did not say that yesterday."

FLEURY.

"If you speak to me again, you will have my fist in your face, you! It is certain that you have stolen Monsieur Rabourdin's papers.—Dutocq leaves.—Go, complain to your Monsieur des Lupeaulx, spy!"

BIXIOU—laughing and making grimaces like a monkey.

"I am curious to know how the division will get along? Monsieur Rabourdin was such a wonderful man that he must have had an especial purpose in writing that work. The ministry loses, in him, a famous chief."—He rubs his hands.

LAURENT.

"Monsieur Fleury is requested at the secretary's office."

THE CLERKS OF TWO OFFICES.

"Done for."

FLEURY—leaving.

"It is all the same to me, I have a position as responsible editor. I shall have the whole day to myself to amuse myself or to fill some sparkling page in the daily paper."

BIXIOU.

"Dutocq has already dismissed poor Desroys, accused of trying to cut off heads."—

THUILLIER.

"Of Kings?"—

BIXIOU.

"Receive my compliments.—That is a fine saying, that!"

COLLEVILLE—entering joyously.

"Gentlemen, I am your chief—"

THUILLIER—embracing Colleville.

"Ah! my friend, were I in your place, I would not be so well pleased."

BIXIOU.

"It is his wife's doings, and has been well planned."—Roars of laughter.—

POIRET.

"Let some one tell me the meaning of what has happened to-day?"—

BIXIOU.

"Do you really want to know? The antechamber of the administration will be a chamber, the court its boudoir, the usual entrance will be through the cellar, and the bed is more than ever the private path of communication."

POIRET.

"Monsieur Bixiou, I pray you to explain yourself."

BIXIOU.

"I will paraphrase my words. In order to be something, one must begin by being everything. Evidently, an administrative reform is needed; for, on my word of honor, the state robs its officials as

much as the officials rob the state as regards hours; but we work little because we receive next to nothing. There are too many of us for the work to be done, and my *Virtuous-Rabourdin* saw that! Gentlemen, this great official foresaw what would happen, what these idiots call the working of our admirable liberal institutions. The Chamber of Deputies will want to administrate, and the administrators will desire to become legislators. The government will try to administrate and the administration will aspire to govern. Thus the laws will become mere regulations, and the ordinances will become the laws. God made this epoch to create laughter. I live in the admiration of the spectacle which the greatest wit of modern times, Louis XVIII., has prepared for us.—General consternation.—Gentlemen, if France, the best ruled country of Europe, is thus, judge what must be the condition of the others? Unhappy countries, I ask myself how they can exist without two Chambers, without the liberty of the press, without the reports or memoranda, without circulars, without an army of clerks!—Ah! dear! How do they maintain armies and navies? How do they exist without discussing at every breath they draw, and at every mouthful they eat?—Can these be called governments, nations? I am upheld in my opinion—travelers' tales—that these people pretended to have a system of politics, and that they wield a certain influence; but I pity them! They have not *enlightened progress*, they cannot start an idea, they have no independent tribunes, they are yet in

a state of barbarism. The French people alone have ideas. You understand, Monsieur Poiret,—Poiret was stunned as by a blow.—how a nation can dispense with chiefs of divisions, directors-general, and the beautiful staff, the glory of France and of the Emperor Napoléon,—who had sufficient reason for creating positions. See how these nations have the audacity to exist, and that in Vienna there can be counted nearly a hundred clerks in the war department, while with us the salaries and the pensions amount to the third of the budget, a thing that was not thought of before the Revolution. I will resume by saying that the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, which has very little to do, should offer a prize for the man who can solve this question: '*Which State is the better organized, the one that accomplishes great things with few officials, or the one which accomplishes little with many officials?*'"

POIRET.

"Is that your last word?"

BIXIOU.

"*Yes, sir!—Ya, mein herr!—Si, signor! Da!*—I will excuse you from hearing this same sentiment expressed in the remaining languages."

POIRET—lifting his hands to heaven.

"My God, and people say that you are witty!"

BIXIOU.

"You have not, then, understood me?"

PHELLION.

"Your last remark was, however, quite sensible—"

BIXIOU.

"Just like the budget, as complicated as it appeared to be simple. I place it before you as a beacon, at the edge of this hole, this abyss, this volcano called by *The Constitutionnel*, 'the political horizon.'"

POIRET.

"I would prefer an explanation within my understanding—"

BIXIOU.

"Long live Rabourdin!—there is my opinion. Are you satisfied?"

COLLEVILLE—seriously.

"Monsieur Rabourdin had but one defect."

POIRET.

"What?"

COLLEVILLE.

"That of being a statesman instead of a head-clerk."

PHELLION—standing before Bixiou.

"Why, sir, did you, who understood Monsieur Rabourdin so well, why did you make that ign—that inf—that hideous caricature?"

BIXIOU.

"And our bet? Do you forget that I was playing the devil's part, and that your bureau owes me a dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale?*"

POIRET—very much annoyed.

"It is then settled that I am to leave the office without ever having been able to understand a sentence, a word, a thought uttered by Monsieur Bixiou."

BIXIOU.

"That is your own fault! Ask these gentlemen.—Gentlemen, have you understood the purport of my remarks? Were they true? Were they clear?"

ALL.

"Alas, yes!"

MINARD.

"And the proof is that I have just written my resignation. Adieu, gentlemen; I shall plunge into trade—"

BIXIOU.

"Have you invented mechanical corsets or babies' feeding-bottles, fire-engines or dashboards, chimneys which consume no fuel, or ranges which cook cutlets with three sheets of paper?"

MINARD—leaving.

"I shall keep my secret."

BIXIOU.

"Ah! well, young Poiret, junior, you see—all these gentlemen understand me."—

POIRET—humiliated.

"Monsieur Bixiou, will you do me the honor for once of descending to my level sufficiently to speak in a way I can understand?"—

BIXIOU—casting a side glance at the clerks.

"Cheerfully.—He catches Poiret by the button of his overcoat.—Before you leave this place, perhaps you would be glad to know what you are—"

POIRET—quickly.

"An honest man, sir."

BIXIOU—shrugging his shoulders.

—"To define, to explain, to fathom, to analyze what a government clerk is?—Do you know what he is?"

POIRET.

"I believe I do."

BIXIOU—twisting the button.

"I doubt it."

POIRET.

"He is a man paid by the government to do work."

BIXIOU.

"Evidently; thus a soldier is a clerk?"

POIRET—embarrassed.

"But, no."

BIXIOU.

"Nevertheless, he is paid by the government to mount guard and pass in review. You would tell me that he has a great desire to leave his place, that he is too rarely in his place, that he works too hard and generally touches too little metal, always excepting the metal of which his gun is made."

POIRET—staring.

"Ah! well, sir, a government clerk is, speaking more logically, a man who depends on his salary for his livelihood, and who, therefore, is not free to leave his position, for he does not know how to do anything else than to draw up papers."

BIXIOU.

"Ah! we are about to arrive at a solution:—thus the office is the clerk's shell. There could be no clerk without the office, no office without the clerk. But what, then, do you call the custom-house officer?—Poiret begins to fidget, and tries to escape Bixiou, who has twisted off one of his buttons, and catches him by another.—Bah! he is, from the bureaucratic point of view, a neutral being. The custom-house officer is only half a clerk; he is on the confines between the offices and the army, as on the frontiers; neither altogether a soldier, nor yet altogether a clerk. But, papa, where are we now?—He twists a button.—When does the government clerk cease to exist? A grave question! Is a prefect a clerk?"

POIRET—timidly.

"He is a functionary."

BIXIOU.

"Ah! you make the mistake of stating that a functionary is not a clerk!"—

POIRET—fatigued, glances at all the clerks.

"Monsieur Godard looks as though he had something to say."

GODARD.

"The clerk is the order, the functionary is a species."

BIXIOU—smiling.

"I did not believe you capable of making this ingenious distinction, brave subordinate."

POIRET.

"How much further are we going?"

BIXIOU.

"There! there! old man, do not step on your tether!—Listen, and we will ere long understand each other. See, let us lay down a maxim which I bequeath to the bureaus. Where the clerk ends, the functionary begins; where the functionary ends, the statesman begins. There are, however, few statesmen among the prefects. The prefects in that case would represent a neutral, but superior, class. They would find themselves half-way between the statesman and the clerk, just as the custom-house officer is placed between the civil and military departments. Let us continue to explain these important questions.—Poiret blushes.—Cannot this be formulated on this theory worthy of a Rochefoucauld: Those who receive over twenty thousand francs salary cease to be clerks. We can deduce mathematically this first *corollary:* the statesman is apparent in the matter of superior salaries, and this not less important and logical second *corollary! directors-general* may become statesmen. Perhaps it is in this sense that more than one deputy says to

himself: 'It is a fine thing to be director-general!' But in the interest of the French language and the Academy—"

POIRET—*magnetized by the steadiness of Bixiou's glance.*

"The French language!—The Academy!—"

BIXIOU—*He twists off a second button and seizes an upper button.*

"Yes, in the interest of our beautiful language, it should be observed that, if the chief of a bureau may occasionally be a clerk, the head of a division must be a bureaucrat. These gentlemen,—*he turns toward the clerks, as he shows them a third button twisted off Poiret's coat*—these gentlemen will appreciate this delicate shade of meaning.—Thus, Papa Poiret, the government clerk, ends by becoming chief of the division. This is the question well settled, there no longer remains any uncertainty; the government clerk who has seemed undefinable is defined."

POIRET.

"That seems to me to be beyond doubt."

BIXIOU.

"Nevertheless, do me the kindness to answer this question: A judge being irremovable, and consequently debarred from being, according to your subtle distinction, a functionary, and not having a salary in proportion to his work, should he be included in the class of clerks?"—

POIRET—*looking at the cornice.*

"Sir, I do not understand you."—

BIXIOU—twisting off a fourth button.

"I am trying to prove to you, sir, that nothing is simple; but, above all, and what I am going to say is meant for philosophers—if you will allow me to travesty a saying of Louis XVIII.—I wish to show that, apart from the necessity of definitions, one is often led into quarrels."

POIRET—wiping his forehead.

"Pardon, sir, I have a pain in my heart.—He tries to button his coat.—Ah! you have cut off all my buttons!"

BIXIOU.

"Ah! well, do you understand?"

POIRET—discontentedly.

"Yes, sir,—yes, I understand that you have tried to play a very bad joke on me by cutting off my buttons, without my knowledge."—

BIXIOU—seriously.

"Old man, you are mistaken. I desired to engrave in your brain the most vivid image possible of the constitutional government.—All the clerks regard Bixiou; Poiret, stupefied, gazes at him restlessly.—And so to keep my word with you. I have spoken in parables just as savages do!—*Listen.*—While the ministers start discussions in the Chambers, about as conclusive as this, and about as useful as ours, the administration cuts the buttons off the tax-payers."

ALL.

"Bravo! Bixiou."

POIRET—who now understands.

"I do not grieve over the loss of my buttons."

BIXIOU.

"I shall follow the example of Minard; I shall not trouble myself to sign a receipt for such a little amount, and I shall deprive the ministry of my co-operation."—He leaves amidst the laughter of all the clerks.

In the minister's reception room there was passing another scene more instructive than this, for by it we learn how great thoughts perish in high places, and in what way they console themselves there for misfortunes. At this moment des Lupeaulx was presenting Baudoyer, the new director, to the minister. In the drawing-room were two or three ministerial deputies, some influential men, and Monsieur Clergeot, to whom His Excellency gave the assurance of a fine salary. After the exchange of a few common-place sentences, the business of the day was on the carpet.

A DEPUTY.

"You will no longer have Rabourdin?"

DES LUPEAULX.

"He has resigned."

CLERGEOT.

"It is said that he wished to reform the administration."

THE MINISTER—regarding the deputies.

"Perhaps the salaries are not in proportion to the services exacted."

DE LA BRIÉRE.

"According to Monsieur Rabourdin a hundred

clerks at twelve thousand francs would accomplish more work and do it faster than a thousand clerks with a salary of twelve hundred francs."

CLERGEOT.

"Perhaps he is right.

THE MINISTER.

"But how can you change this! The machine is set up that way, it must be broken to pieces before it can be reformed; but who, then, would have the courage, in the presence of the tribunal, under the fire of the foolish outcries of the opposition, or the terrible articles in the newspapers? It follows that there will one day be a damaging solution of continuity between the government and the administration."

THE DEPUTY.

"In what way?"

THE MINISTER.

"A minister should wish for the public good without having the power of bringing it about. You would create interminable delays between things and their results. If you have made the theft of a shilling truly impossible, you will not be able to prevent collusions in the sphere of self-interest. Certain operations will only be conceded by secret stipulations, which it will be difficult to detect. Moreover, the clerks, from the lowest to the chief-clerk of the office, will have opinions of their own; they will no longer be the hands to one brain, they will no longer represent the opinions of the government; the opposition tends to give them the right to

speak against the government, to vote against it, to criticise it."

BAUDOYER—in a low voice, but so as to be heard.

"Monseigneur is sublime."

DES LUPEAULX.

"It is certain that bureaucracy has its defects; I find it slow and insolent; it hampers ministerial action a little too much; it stifles many projects and arrests progress; but the French administration is exceedingly useful—"

BAUDOYER.

"That is so."

DES LUPEAULX.

"If only to sustain the paper and stamp factories. If, like excellent housekeepers, it is rather fussy, it can, at any moment, render an account of its expenditures. Where is the shrewd merchant who would not gladly throw, in the gulf of some insurance company, five per cent of the entire gain of his working capital, so as not to have any *leakage?*"

THE DEPUTY—a manufacturer.

"The industries of two worlds would subscribe with joy to such an arrangement with this bad genius called leakage."

DES LUPEAULX.

"Ah! well, although statistics are the childish resources of modern states, who mistake figures for calculation, one must make use of figures to be

able to calculate. Let us calculate, then. Figures are, moreover, the tried argument of societies based on self-interest and on money; that is the sort of society the charter has given us! in my opinion, at least. Then, nothing convinces the *intelligent masses* like figures. All things, say our statesmen of the Left, are in fact solved by figures. Let us calculate.—The minister goes off in a corner to talk in a low voice with a deputy.—There are about forty thousand government clerks in France, as shown by the salaries, not counting a workman, for a road-maker, a street-sweeper, a roller of segars, are not clerks. The average salary is fifteen hundred francs. Multiply forty thousand by fifteen hundred, and you have sixty millions. Now, in the first place a publicist would call the attention of China and of Russia, where all the clerks steal, also that of Austria, of the American republics, of the world, to the fact that for this price France possesses the most ferreting, critical, scribbling, paper-blotting, cataloguing, fault-finding, inspecting, painstaking, in other words, the most shrewd old housekeeper of all known administrations. There is not spent, or hoarded, in France even so much as a centime which is not ordered by a note, proved by vouchers, produced and reproduced on balance-sheets, receipted when paid; then the orders and receipts are all registered, checked and verified by spectacled men. At the slightest defect in form the clerk is alarmed, for he lives on these technicalities. Many nations would be satisfied with this state of affairs, but Napoléon did not stop there.

This great organizer re-established supreme magistrates of a court unique in the world. These magistrates pass their days in verifying money-orders, documents, lists, registers, permits, payments, moneys received and moneys expended, etc., which are all written down by the clerks. The severe judges encourage over-scrupulousness, the talent of research, the sharp-sightedness of the lynx, the perspicacity of accounts, to the point of going over all the additions to find possible deficiencies. These great martyrs to figures, return, two years later, to an army commissary, some account in which the error has amounted to only two centimes. Thus the French administration, the purest of all on the globe, has, just as His Excellency has told you, rendered robbery impossible in France, and peculation a myth. Ah! well, what fault can one find? France possesses a revenue of twelve hundred million francs, and she spends it, that is all. Twelve hundred million francs enter her treasury and twelve hundred million francs leave it. She then handles two thousand four hundred millions, and pays only sixty millions,—two and a half per cent,—so as to make sure that there has been no leakage. Our political-kitchen account costs sixty millions, but the gendarmerie, the courts of law, the prisons and the police cost as much and give us no return. Moreover, we employ men incapable of doing any but this one kind of work. Consider this well. The waste, if there is any, can only be moral and legislative; the Chambers of Deputies are their

accomplices, and waste becomes legal. Leaking consists in ordering public works which are neither urgent nor necessary, in ordering new uniforms and gold-lace for the troops, in sending vessels out without inquiring if they have on board sufficient fuel, and then by paying too high a price for the same, in making preparations for war which is never declared, in paying the debts of a state, without requiring reimbursements or security, etc., etc.

BAUDOYER.

"But this leakage in high places has nothing to do with the clerk. This bad management of the nation's affairs concerns the statesman who guides the ship."

THE MINISTER—who has finished his conversation.

"There is some truth in what des Lupeaulx has just said; but let me tell you—to Baudoyer,—director, that no one sees things from the same standpoint as a statesman. To order every kind of expenditure, even if useless, does not constitute bad management. Does this not contribute to the circulation of money, the stagnation of which becomes, especially in France, disastrous in consequence of the avaricious and exceedingly illogical habits of mind prevalent in the provinces, which bury cups of gold—"

THE DEPUTY—who has been listening to des Lupeaulx.

"But it seems to me that, if Your Excellency were right just now, and if our clever friend—taking des Lupeaulx by the arm—is not mistaken, what conclusion shall we come to?"

DES LUPEAULX—after having glanced at the minister.

"No doubt that something needs to be done."

DE LA BRIÉRE—timidly.

"Monsieur Rabourdin, then, was in the right?"

THE MINISTER.

"I will see Rabourdin."

DES LUPEAULX.

"This poor man unfortunately constituted himself the chief judge of the administration, and of the men who compose it; he only wishes three ministers."—

THE MINISTER—interrupting.

"He is then a crank?"

THE DEPUTY.

"How could you represent in this way the heads of the parties composing the Chamber of Deputies?"

BAUDOYER—with an air which he thought was smart.

"Perhaps Monsieur Rabourdin would also change the constitution given by a legislative sovereign."

THE MINISTER—becoming thoughtful, takes de la Brière's arm and leads him away.

"I would like to see the work Rabourdin has written; and as you know about it—"

DE LA BRIÉRE—in the office.

"He has burned it all. You permitted him to be dishonored, and so he has resigned from the ministry. Do not think, Monseigneur, that he ever had the

foolish thought—as des Lupeaulx would make you believe—of changing anything in the admirable centralization of power."

THE MINISTER—to himself.

"I have committed a fault.—He is silent for a moment.—What matter? We shall never lack plans for reform—"

DE LA BRIÉRE.

"It is not ideas that we want, but men of execution."

Des Lupeaulx, that great advocate of abuses, entered the office.

"Monseigneur, I start off for my election."

"Wait," said His Excellency, leaving his private secretary and taking the arm of des Lupeaulx, with whom he walked into the recess of the window. "My friend, let me have this arrondissement; in that case you shall be made count, and I will pay your debts.—At last, if after the new chamber is elected, I should remain in office, I will find the opportunity of having you among others named peer of France.

"You are a man of honor, I accept."

It was in this way that Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx, whose father, ennobled under Louis XV., bore *quartered on the first argent, a wolf ravissant de sable bearing a lamb gules; second, purpure of three mascles argent; two and one; third, paly of gules and argent of twelve pieces; fourth, of gold, on a paly of gules flying and twisted in sinople, supported by four griffin's claws, jessant from the*

sides of the escutcheon, with the motto EN LUPUS IN HISTORIA, was able to surmount this rather satirical escutcheon with the coronet of a count.

In 1830, toward the end of December, Monsieur Rabourdin had some business to transact which required him to go to his old ministry, where the offices had been much agitated by dismissals reaching from the lowest to the highest. This revolution weighed chiefly on the office boys, who do not like new faces too well. Rabourdin having arrived early at the ministry, whose officials he well knew, chanced to overhear the following dialogue between Laurent's two nephews, for their uncle had been pensioned.

"Ah! well. How is your chief of division getting on?"

"Do not speak to me about him; I can do nothing with him. He rings for me to ask me if I have seen his handkerchief or his snuff-box. He receives people without keeping them waiting; in fact, he has not the slightest dignity. As for me, I am obliged to say to him: 'But, sir, your predecessor, the count, in the interest of power, hacked his arm-chair with his pen-knife, to make believe he was working.' In addition he disarranges everything. I find everything in chaotic confusion. He has a very small mind—and now tell me about your minister?"

"Mine? Oh! I have at last tamed him; he knows now where his letter-paper and envelopes, his wood, and all his belongings are kept. My former master used to swear, this one is mild,—but he has not an

aristocratic air; then he wears no decoration. I do not like to see a chief without a decoration; he might be mistaken for one of us, which would be humiliating. He carries off the office letter-paper, and he asked me if I could go to his house and assist the servants when receptions were to be given."

"Ah! what a government, my friend."

"Yes, everyone connected with it economizes."

"Provided they do not curtail our poor salaries!"

"I am afraid they will. The chambers are very watchful. They find fault with us for using too much wood."

"Ah! well, that will not last long, if they take this course."

"We are caught; some one is listening to us."

"Ah! It is the defunct Monsieur Rabourdin.—Ah! sir, I recognize you by your way of announcing your presence.—If you have business here, no one will be cognizant of the respect due to you, for we are the only ones who remain of those who were here in your time—Messrs. Colleville and Baudoyer have not used the morocco of their arm-chairs since your departure.—Oh! my God, six months later they were made tax-collectors in Paris."

Paris, July, 1836.

A PRINCE OF BOHEMIA

TO HEINRICH HEINE

MY DEAR HEINE: I dedicate this study to you; to you who represent in Paris the spirit and poetry of Germany, as in Germany you represent the vivacity and wit of French criticism; to you who understand better than anybody how much criticism, humor, love, and truth this may contain.

DE BALZAC.

*

"My dear friend," said Madame de la Baudraye, drawing out a manuscript from under the cushion of her sofa, "will you forgive me if, in our present straits, I have been induced to make a story of what you told us the other day?"

"Everything is fair prey nowadays; have you not seen authors who, for lack of invention, serve up their own hearts, and often those of their mistresses, to the public? It will become the fashion, my dear, to run in search of adventures, less for the sake of being the hero of them than for the pleasure of relating them."

"After all, you and the Marquise de Rochefide will have paid our rent; and I do not think, by the way things are going here, that I shall ever pay yours."

"Who can tell? Perhaps you may have the same good luck as Madame de Rochefide."

"Do you think it good luck to return to one's husband?"

"No; only it is uncommon luck. —Come, I am listening to you."

Madame de la Baudraye read as follows:

The scene is laid in a gorgeous salon in the Rue de Chartres-du-Roule. One of the most celebrated authors of his time is seated upon a sofa beside a

very noble marquise, with whom he is on the intimate terms of a man whom a lady honors with her favor; a hanger-on whom she keeps for her convenience rather than for lack of somebody better.

"Well," said she, "have you found those letters which you spoke of yesterday, and without which you were unable to tell me all that concerns *him?*"

"I have them."

"It is your turn; I am listening as a child does to his mother when she tells him the story of the *Great Green Serpent.*"

"I count the young man in question among those persons of my acquaintance whom I am in the habit of calling my friends. He is a gentleman of infinite wit, but infinitely unfortunate; full of excellent intentions, and delightful in conversation. Though young, he has already seen a great deal of the world; and while waiting for better things, he belongs to *Bohemia.* Bohemia, as we must call the theory of life current in the Boulevard des Italiens, is made up of young men between the ages of twenty and thirty, all of them men of genius in their way; little known as yet, but to be known hereafter, when they are sure to be distinguished. They already cut a figure in the times of the carnival, when they let off the effervescence of their spirits—too tightly bottled up during the rest of the year—in pranks that are more or less ludicrous. What a time we are living in, and how preposterous that the immense forces of such a power should be idly dissipated! There are in Bohemia diplomats capable of overturning

the plans of Russia, if they could feel themselves supported by the power of France. There are writers, administrators, soldiers, journalists, artists; in short, capacity and intelligence of all kinds are represented there. It is a little world in itself. If the Emperor of Russia bought Bohemia for twenty millions, provided that he could remove it from the asphalt of the boulevards and set it down in Odessa, in a year Odessa would be Paris. There in Bohemia is withering useless the flower of that admirable French youth so much sought after by Napoléon and Louis XIV., but which has been neglected for the last thirty years by the senile government under which everything in France decays; that noble youth of which Professor Tissot—a man who can be trusted—was saying only yesterday: 'The Emperor employed the young men in all directions, and found them worthy of himself; in his councils, in general administration, in negotiations bristling with difficulties or full of perils, and in the government of conquered countries; and everywhere they fulfilled his expectations! Young men were for him the *missi dominici* of Charlemagne.' The one word 'Bohemia' explains everything. Bohemia owns nothing, and yet lives on what it has. Hope is its religion, faith in itself its code, and charity is supposed to be its finance. All its young men are greater than their misfortunes; they are beneath prosperity, but above destiny. Always astride on an *if*, witty as the column of jests in a newspaper, they are gay as only debtors can be, and oh! they

are as deep in debt as in drink! Finally, this is what I am leading up to, they are all in love, over head and ears in love! Imagine Lovelace, Henry IV., the Régent, Werther, Saint-Preux, René, and Maréchal Richelieu all rolled into a single man, and you may have some idea of their love. And what lovers they make! Above all, they are eclectics in love, and serve you up such a passion as might please any woman; their heart is like the bill of fare at a restaurant. They have unconsciously put Stendhal's book of *Love* into practice, perhaps without even having read it, and are familiar with its sections on love as a taste, as a passion, as a caprice, crystallized love, and especially transient love. Everything is acceptable to them, and they have created the burlesque axiom that *all women are equal in the sight of man*. This is vigorously expressed; but as I think the spirit of it false, I do not care for the letter. Madame, the name of my friend is Gabriel-Jean-Anne-Victor-Benjamin-Georges-Ferdinand-Charles-Édouard Rusticoli, Count de la Palférine. The Rusticoli came into France with Catherine de Medici, having just been dispossessed of a very small sovereignty in Tuscany. They were distantly related to the house of Este, and intermarried with the Guises. They killed a great many Protestants at the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, and Charles IX. gave one of them in marriage an heiress of the county of La Palférine, which had been confiscated from the Duc de Savoy. Henry IV. took it away from them again, although he left them the title.

That great king committed the folly of returning the fief to the Duc de Savoy, but in exchange two offices of the crown and one governorship were given to the Comtes de la Palférine. Before the Medici possessed armorial bearings the La Palférines had worn *a silver cross, branded with an azure fleur-de-lys* —the fleur-de-lys was added by letters patent of Charles IX.—*surmounted by a count's coronet, and flanked by two peasants,* with IN HOC SIGNO VINCIMUS for a motto. They played a brilliant part under the Valois and until the quasi-reign of Richelieu; then they declined under Louis XIV., and were ruined under Louis XV. The grandfather of my friend squandered what remained of his princely fortune upon Mademoiselle Laguerre, whom he, first of all and before Bouret, brought into fashion. The father of Charles-Édouard, who was in 1789 a penniless officer, had the good sense, with the aid of the Revolution, to call himself Rusticoli. He married, during the Italian wars, one of the Capponi, a goddaughter of the Countess Albani; thence his son's last Christian name! He was one of the best colonels in the army, and the Emperor named him commander of the Legion of Honor and made him count. The colonel's spinal column was slightly crooked, and his son used to say, laughing, that he was a *count made over.* General Count Rusticoli—for he had become a brigadier-general at Ratisbonne—died at Vienna after the battle of Wagram, where he was named general of the division on the field of battle. His name, his Italian celebrity, and

his merit would have won a marshal's staff for him sooner or later. Under the Restoration he would have built up again the great and splendid house of La Palférine, distinguished as far back as 1100 under the name of Rusticoli—for the Rusticoli had then already furnished a pope and made two revolutions in the Kingdom of Naples; that house that was so illustrious and so able under the Valois that the La Palférines, although determined members of the Fronde, still existed under Louis XIV.; and Mazarin had liked them, for he recognized in them a relic of Tuscany. To-day, when Charles-Édouard de la Palférine is spoken of, there are not three people in a hundred who know what the house of La Palférine is; but the Bourbons have indeed left a Foix-Grailly, living by his brush! Ah! if you knew the courage with which Édouard de la Palférine has accepted this obscure position! And how he mocks the bourgeois of 1830! What attic salt! If Bohemia could tolerate a king, he would be King of Bohemia. His spirit is inexhaustible. We owe to him the map of Bohemia and the names of the seven castles that Nodier could not discover."

"That," said the marquise, "is the only thing wanting in one of the cleverest burlesques of our time."

"A few characteristics of my friend La Palférine will put you in a position to judge him," answered Nathan. "La Palférine happened to find one of his friends, a fellow-Bohemian, engaged in an altercation on the boulevard with a bourgeois who thought

himself insulted. Bohemia is very high-handed with the modern power. There was talk of a duel.

"'One moment,' said La Palférine, immediately becoming a perfect Lauzun—'one moment! Sir, do you exist?'

"'What, sir?' asked the bourgeois.

"'Yes, do you exist? What is your name?'

"'Godin.'

"'Eh? Godin!' exclaimed La Palférine's friend.

"'One moment, my dear sir,' said La Palférine, stopping his friend. 'Perhaps you belong to the Trigaudin family?'

"Astonishment on the part of the bourgeois.

"'No? Then you belong to the new ducal house of Gaëta—an imperial creation? No? Well, how can you expect to fight with my friend, who *will be* a secretary of the embassy and an ambassador, and to whom you will one day owe respect?—Godin! There is no such thing; you are nobody. Godin! My friend cannot fight in the air. When a man is somebody, he will not fight with a nobody. Come, my dear sir, good-bye.'

"'My respects to your wife,' added the friend.

"One day La Palférine was walking with a friend of his, who threw the end of his cigar into the face of a passer-by. That gentleman had the bad taste to lose his temper.

"'You have been exposed to the fire of your adversary,' said the young count, 'and the witnesses declare that your honor is satisfied.'

"He owed a thousand francs to his tailor, who,

instead of going in person, sent his head clerk, one morning, to La Palférine. The fellow discovered the unhappy debtor in the sixth story of a building at the bottom of a court at the head of the Faubourg du Roule. There was no furniture in the room except a bed, and what a bed! and a table, and what a table! La Palférine listened to the clerk's ridiculous demand, which, as he told us, he considered unlawful, made at seven o'clock in the morning.

"'Go tell your master,' answered he, with the gesture and pose of Mirabeau, 'the situation in which you found me.'

"The clerk fell back, excusing himself profusely. La Palférine caught sight of the young man at the top of the stairs, and rising with a solemnity exemplified in the verses of Britannicus, called to him:

"'Please notice my staircase! Pay particular attention to my staircase, so that you may not forget to tell him about my staircase.'

"In whatever circumstances he has been thrown by chance, La Palférine has never been found below the mark, without ready wit, or in bad taste. He invariably shows the genius of Rivarol and the subtlety of a great French noble. It is he who invented the delightful story of the friend of the banker Lafitte, who went to the office of the *national subscription* proposed for the purpose of allowing the banker to keep his palace, in which the Revolution of 1830 had been plotted.

"'Here are five francs,' said he; 'give me a hundred sous in change.'

"There was a caricature made of it.

"La Palférine had the misfortune, as an indictment would put it, to make a young girl a mother. The girl was no novice, and confessed her fault to her mother, who, good bourgeoise as she was, rushed off to La Palférine to ask what he proposed to do.

"'Madame, I am neither a doctor nor a nurse.'

"She was thunderstruck; but she returned to the charge three or four years later, and insisted upon knowing what he expected to do.

"'O, madame,' he answered, 'when the child is seven years old—at which age children pass from the hands of women into those of men'—a motion of assent from the mother—'if the child is indeed mine'—gesture on the part of the mother,—'if he is strikingly like me, if he promises to be a gentleman, if I recognize in him my own species of wit, and, above all, the air of a Rusticoli, oh! then,'—another gesture,—'on my honor as a gentleman, I will give him—a stick of barley-sugar!'

"All this, if you will allow me to make use of the style Monsieur de Sainte-Beuve employs in his biographies of men unknown to fame, is the sportive, jocular side of a strong race; but it is already corrupt. It reminds one more of the Parc-aux-Cerfs than the Hôtel de Rambouillet. The race is not a *gentle one*, and I fear that it is more inclined to debauchery than I should wish in generous, gifted natures; but its gallantry is after the style of Richelieu—gay almost to buffoonery; it belongs to the *excesses* of the eighteenth century; it goes back

to the time of the mousquetaires, and outdoes Champcenetz; but this fickleness seems part of the arabesques and ornaments of the old court of the Valois. In a time as moral as our own, we should indignantly protest against such audacity; but the stick of barley-sugar may serve to show young maidens the danger of such intimacies, at first full of deceptive dreams and delights, rose-colored and overgrown with flowers, but the downward slopes of which are left unwatched, and lead to extravagant excess, to errors attended with hurtful excitements and too agitating results. This anecdote shows the vivacious and consummate intelligence of La Palférine, for, as Pascal recommended, he is *between two extremes:* he is both tender and pitiless, and, like Epaminondas, he is equally great in either direction. Besides, this jest of his marks the period; in old times there were no accoucheurs; so this witticism of his, which will endure, explains the refinements of our civilization."

"Come now, my dear Nathan, what nonsense is this?" asked the marquise, in surprise.

"Madame la Marquise," answered Nathan, "you are ignorant of the value of these elaborate phrases. I am now talking the new French of Sainte-Beuve. I shall continue. One day, as La Palférine was walking along the boulevard, arm in arm with some of his friends, he saw approaching one of the most ferocious of his creditors, who addressed him with:

"'Are you thinking of me, sir?'

"'Not the least in the world!' replied the count.

"Observe how difficult his position was. Under similar circumstances Talleyrand had said, 'You are very inquisitive, my friend.' And La Palférine could not try to imitate the inimitable Talleyrand. The young count is as generous as Buckingham, and cannot endure to be taken unawares; so one day that he had nothing to give to a chimney-sweep, he plunged his hand into a cask of grapes lying at the door of a grocer's shop, and filled the cap of the little boy, who ate the grapes with great relish. The grocer began by laughing and ended by shaking hands with La Palférine.

"'Oh, fie, sir!' said the count; 'your left hand should not know what my right hand has just given.'

"Charles-Édouard is of an adventurous disposition; he neither seeks nor avoids a quarrel, but he has an intelligent daring. On seeing, in the lobby of the opera, a man who had spoken of him in unflattering terms, he nudged him as he passed, and then, turning back, nudged him again.

"'You are awkward,' said the man.

"'On the contrary, I did it on purpose.'

"The young man presented his card.

"'It is very dirty,' returned La Palférine; 'you have kept it too long in your pocket. Be so good as to give me another,' added he, throwing it away.

"He received on the spot a cut from the sword of his adversary, who, on seeing the blood flow, was anxious to end it there, and exclaimed:

"'You are wounded, sir.'

"'I refuse to acknowledge the blow,' he replied, with as much coolness as if he were in a fencing-school.

"And he returned a similar thrust, only a much deeper one, adding:

"'There is the proper thrust, sir.'

"His adversary went to bed for six months. All this is in the style of Monsieur Sainte-Beuve, that makes one think of the wits of the palmy days of the monarchy, and of their ingenious jests. The life is free and unfettered, but without steadfastness of purpose; and the gaiety of imagination only such as is vouchsafed to earliest youth. The bloom has left the flower, but there remains the dried grain, abundant and fruitful, to provide for the winter season. Do not you think this is an unsatisfied, restless state of things, indescribable and impossible to analyze, yet self-comprehending, and ready to burst into flames far and wide when the moment for action arrives? It is like the asperity of the cloister: there is a vague, obscure melancholy about it—an acrid fermentation caused by the idle stagnation of the forces of youth."

"That is enough," said the marquise; "you are giving me a shower-bath."

"It is like the tedium of a long afternoon. The young people have no occupation, and rather than do nothing at all they get into mischief, as will always happen in France. Just now they have two sides—the studious side of the *misunderstood*, and the ardent side of the *passionate*."

"Enough!" repeated Madame de Rochefide, with a decided gesture; "you make me nervous."

"In order to complete my description of La Palférine I shall hasten to enter the domain of gallantry; for I want you to understand the particular genius of this young man. He is admirably characteristic of a portion of that wanton youth that is strong enough to laugh at the situation in which it has been placed by the folly of its rulers, calculating enough to observe the uselessness of work and to do nothing, and eager enough to cling to pleasure, the only thing of which it has not been robbed. But a policy that is at once bourgeois, commercial and bigoted goes on stopping up the outlets through which so much ability and talent might flow and spread themselves. Nothing for these young poets and scholars! To make you understand the stupidity of the new government I shall tell you something that happened to La Palférine. There is on the civil list *an agent of a charity organization*. This agent heard one day that La Palférine was in extreme distress; he reported him, and carried fifty francs to the assistance of the heir of the Rusticoli. La Palférine received this gentleman with perfect grace, and entered into conversation with him about the personages at court.

"'Is it true,' asked he, 'that Mademoiselle d'Orléans is to contribute so large a sum to the noble work undertaken in behalf of her nephew? It is very noble of her.'

"La Palférine whispered to a little ten-year-old

boy who served him for nothing. He called him *Father Anchise,* and had once said of him:

"'I never saw so much simplicity and so much intelligence united. He would go through fire for me; he understands everything, and yet he cannot understand that I can do nothing for him.'

"Anchise brought back from a livery-stable a magnificent coupé, with a footman behind it. By the time La Palférine heard the noise of the carriage, he had cleverly led up the conversation to the occupation of his visitor, whom he has since nicknamed a charity man-of-all-work. He had inquired as to his business and his salary.

"'Do they give you a carriage to go about the city with?' he asked.

"'Oh, no!' said the clerk.

"Whereupon La Palférine and a friend who happened to be with him went downstairs with the poor man and forced him to get into the carriage, as the rain was falling in torrents. La Palférine had arranged everything, and offered to drive the clerk wherever he wished to go. After the alms-giver had finished his next visit, he found the equipage waiting for him at the door, and the footman handed him the following note, written in pencil:

"'This carriage has been paid for, for three days, by the Count Rusticoli de la Palférine, who is only too happy to assist the charities of the court by lending wings to its benevolence.'

"La Palférine now calls the civil list an uncivil list.

"He was passionately loved by a woman whose conduct was of a light nature. Antonia lived in Rue du Helder, and was well known there, though at the time of her intimacy with the count she had not as yet become notorious. She had plenty of that old-time impertinence which the women of to-day have carried to the pitch of insolence. After two weeks of unmixed happiness the woman was obliged to return, in the interest of her civil list, to a less exclusive system of passion. On discovering that her dealings with him were lacking in frankness, La Palférine wrote to Madame Antonia this letter that made her famous:

"'MADAME: Your conduct is as amazing as it is distressing. Not only have you torn my heart by your scorn, but you are so wanting in delicacy as to retain possession of my toothbrush, which my means do not permit me to replace, as my property is already mortgaged beyond its value.

"'Farewell, too lovely and too ungrateful friend! May we meet again in a better world!

"'CHARLES-ÉDOUARD.'

"Certainly—I continue to use the learned style of Monsieur Sainte-Beuve—this far surpasses the raillery of Sterne in his *Sentimental Journey;* it is Scarron without his coarseness. I am not sure, even, that Molière, in a good humor, might not have said, 'This is mine,' as he did of Cyrano's best things. Richelieu was not more consummate when he wrote to the princess who was waiting for him in the kitchen-court of the Palais Royal, '*Stay there*,

my queen, and charm the scullions.' But Charles-Édouard's wit is less bitter. I am not sure whether the Greeks and Romans knew this kind of humor. Perhaps, on a narrower inspection, I might say that Plato approached it, but on the severe and harmonious side—"

"Stop talking that jargon," said the marquise; "you may print it, if you choose, but I do not deserve to be punished by having my ears tortured with it."

"It was in this manner that he made the acquaintance of Claudine," Nathan went on. "It was one of those listless days when young men find life a burden, and, like Blondet in the time of the Restoration, only rouse themselves from the despondency to which the presumption of old men has condemned them, to attempt some mischief, or to undertake one of those huge pieces of buffoonery the sole excuse for which lies in the boldness with which they are conceived, La Palférine was sauntering along the pavement, cane in hand, between Rue de Grammont and Rue de Richelieu. In the distance he saw a woman dressed in the height of fashion. She wore her costly garments so negligently, he said, as to mark her as a princess of the court or of the Opera; but after July, 1830, according to him no mistake was possible, and he knew the princess belonged to the Opera. The young count hastened to her side, as if a meeting had been agreed upon between them; he pursued her with obstinate politeness and gentlemanlike persistence, and turning

upon her an authoritative glance that was most effective, he obliged her to suffer his escort. Any other man would have been chilled by the reception he met with, and disconcerted by her behavior—by the provoking coolness of her manner and the severity of her answers; but La Palférine addressed to her one of those humorous remarks against which no serious resolution can stand. In order to rid herself of him the lady entered her dressmaker's. Charles-Édouard went in, too; he sat down, gave advice and offered his opinion as if he were ready to pay the bill. The lady was annoyed by his coolness, and took her leave. On the stairs she said to La Palférine, her persecutor:

"'Sir, I am going to call on an old lady, a cousin of my husband's, Madame de Bonfalot—'

"'Oh! Madame de Bonfalot?' said the count. 'I am delighted; I will go, too—'

"The couple made their way there, and as Charles-Édouard entered with the lady, it was naturally supposed that she had brought him with her. He joined in the conversation, and was lavish of his unusual and distinguished wit. The visit lasted longer than he had bargained for, so he said to his new friend:

"'Madame, you must not forget that your husband is waiting for us; he only gave us a quarter of an hour's grace.'

"She was confounded by such boldness—which, as you know, is always attractive—and carried away by his triumphant look and the inscrutable candor

of the expression he can assume at will; so, on rising, she was forced to accept the arm of her cavalier and go downstairs with him. On the threshold she said:

"'Sir, I like a joke—'

"'And so do I,' he answered.

"She laughed.

"'But it only depends on you to make this serious,' he added. 'I am the Count of La Palférine, and I should be charmed to place my heart and fortune at your feet.'

"This happened in 1834, and La Palférine was twenty-two years old. By good luck it chanced that on that day he was elegantly dressed. I am going to describe him to you briefly: he is the living likeness of Louis XIII.; he has the same white forehead and delicately moulded temples; the same olive, Italian complexion, white in the high lights; the same brown hair, worn long, and the black imperial; his expression is serious and melancholy, for his person and his character are in striking contrast. As Claudine looked at him and heard his name, a shudder came over her. It did not escape La Palférine, and he threw her a look from his deep, black, almond-shaped eyes, that revealed from beneath their slightly creased and yellow-tinted lids a capacity for enjoyment equal to the endurance of any fatigue. Under the influence of this look she asked for his address.

"'What *maladresse!*' he answered.

"'Oh, bah!' said she, with a smile. 'You are a bird upon the wing, then?'

"'Farewell, madame; you are a woman that I could love, but my fortune is far from keeping pace with my desires—'

"He bowed and left her abruptly, without looking back. Two days afterward, by one of those fatalities only possible in Paris, he went into a pawnbroker's shop to sell one of the superfluities of his wardrobe. He appeared dissatisfied with the price, and had been haggling a long time, when his new friend passed and recognized him.

"'I have made up my mind not to take your trumpet,' he called to the amazed pawnbroker, pointing to an enormous dented trumpet hanging up outside in plain relief against some hunting-liveries that had once belonged to the lackeys of ambassadors and generals of the Empire. Then he turned to follow the young woman with fierce impetuosity. After that great day of the trumpet they agreed admirably.

"Charles-Édouard has most accurate ideas on the subject of love. He thinks that no man can love twice in his life; love comes but once, and is deep as a shoreless sea. At any age this love may burst upon you as grace burst upon Saint Paul; yet a man may live to be sixty without having felt it. According to a fine expression of Heine, love is perhaps the *secret malady of the heart*—a mingling of our feeling of the infinite with the ideal of beauty revealed in visible form. In short, love embraces at one and the same time the creature and the creation. As long as there is no question of this great poem, we

must trifle with those loves that are perishable, and give them that place that we give in literature to light verse as compared with an epic. In his new connection Charles-Édouard experienced neither the thunderburst that declares the advent of true love, nor that gradual unveiling of attractions and recognition of qualities hitherto unknown, that bind together two beings with an ever-growing power. True love may come in only two ways. It is either love at first sight—which is probably an effect of Scotch second sight—or it is the slow fusion of two natures that realize the Platonic idea. But Claudine loved Charles-Édouard to distraction; she felt love, ideal and physical, in its completest form. In short, her passion for La Palférine was a real one; but to him she was only a charming mistress. The devil himself, who is certainly a mighty magician, could have changed nothing in the order of these two unequal passions. I might even say that Claudine often bored Charles-Édouard.

"'After three days I like to throw out of the window the woman I don't care for, and the fish that has been too long in the pantry,' he used to say.

"In Bohemia there is little secrecy about such airy love-affairs. La Palférine often spoke to us of Claudine; but we never saw her, and her real name was never mentioned. Claudine was almost a myth, yet she was familiar to us; and we thus reconciled the laws of good taste with the exigencies of our life in common. We had a formula composed of

such names as Claudine, Hortense, the baroness, the bourgeoise, the empress, the lioness, the Spanish lady, etc., and this gave each of us a vent for his joys, his cares, his griefs, and his hopes, and allowed us the means of communicating our discoveries to one another. We went no farther than this. There is an example in Bohemia of an accidental discovery made concerning the identity of a person of whom we were talking; by unanimous accord she was never mentioned again. This may serve to show that the young have a sense of what true delicacy is. Persons of discrimination understand marvelously the exact limits of a joke and the proper exercise of the French quality known as *blague*—a soldier-like word which we hope will be eliminated from the language, but which alone can describe the spirit of Bohemia. So it happened that we often jested about Claudine and the count. It was 'What are you doing with Claudine? And how is your Claudine? Is it still a Claudine?' sung to Rossini's air of '*Toujours Gessler!*' etc.

"'I wish my worst enemy just such a mistress,' said La Palférine to us one day. 'No terrier, no greyhound, no poodle can be compared with her for her absolute sweetness, submission, and tenderness. At times I reproach myself and call myself to account for my harshness. Claudine obeys me with the docility of a saint. She comes to see me, I send her away; she goes, but lingers weeping in the court-yard. I may not wish to see her for a whole week, and then I appoint her a certain time on the

next Tuesday—say at midnight or at six o'clock in the morning, at ten or at five; at the most inconvenient hours, at breakfast or dinner time; early in the morning or late at night—and she is sure to come, resplendent, lovely, beautifully dressed, at the exact moment! And she is married—entangled in all the obligations and duties of a household. I should not like to have to invent all the stratagems and excuses she must think of in order to conform to my caprices. Nothing wearies her; she is always faithful! I tell her that it is not love, but obstinacy. She writes me every day, and I do not read her letters; she has found it out, but she keeps on writing. Look, there are two hundred letters in that chest. She begs me to take one of her letters every day to wipe my razors on, and I do so! She is right in thinking that a glimpse of her handwriting makes me think of her.'

"La Palférine was dressing as he said this. I took the letter of which he was about to make use; I read it and kept it, as he did not ask it back; here it is, for I found it, as I promised you I should:

"'MONDAY, MIDNIGHT.

"'Well, my friend, are you satisfied with me? I did not ask you to let me take your hand, that I was longing to press to my lips and heart, and yet it would have been so easy for you to give it to me. No, I did not ask you, for I was too much afraid of displeasing you. Know one thing! although I am painfully aware how entirely indifferent my

behavior is to you, I am nevertheless extremely careful of my conduct. A woman who belongs to you, under whatsoever title and however secretly, must avoid incurring the slightest censure. My love for you is as pure as that of the angels of heaven, who have no secrets; wherever I am, I think I am still in your presence, and I wish to do you honor.

"'All you said to me about my manner of dressing struck me and made me understand how superior people of high birth are to others. I had still some trace of the opera-dancer in the cut of my gowns and my bonnets. In a moment I recognized how far I was from good taste, and when I go to you dressed like a duchess, you will hardly recognize me. Oh, how kind you have been to your Claudine, and how I thank you for all you have taught me! How much interest you showed in those few words! You must have given some thought to that little thing that belongs to you named Claudine! My stupid husband would never have enlightened me; *he* is pleased with all I do; and besides, *he* is too *domestic*, too prosaic, to know what is beautiful. Tuesday is a long time for me to wait! Tuesday I shall be with you for hours! Ah! on Tuesday I shall try to imagine that hours are months, and that they will go on forever. I live in the hope of that morning, as later on, when it is passed, I shall live on the recollection of it. Hope is a memory of desire that is to come, and remembrance is a memory of joy that has gone. How sweet this life of thought is to me! I try to devise expressions of my affection for you

that shall be mine alone, and the secret of which no other woman shall ever guess. I turn cold when I think something may happen to prevent our meeting. Oh! I would gladly break with *him* if it were necessary; but no obstacle can ever arise here. It is you who may wish to go into society, perhaps to call upon another woman. Oh! spare me Tuesday! If you took it away from me, Charles, you do not know what trouble you would cause *him;* for I should make his life miserable. If you don't wish to see me, if you will go into society, let me come all the same, while you are dressing; only let me see you—I ask no more than that; and let this prove to you how purely I love you. Since the day you gave me permission to love you,—and as I am yours, you must have given me that permission,—I have loved you with all the strength of my soul, and I shall love you always; for having once loved you, I cannot and must not love any other man. So, when you are within sight of those eyes that will look upon no one but you, you will feel in your Claudine the existence of some divine spark that you have called into being. Alas! with you I am no coquette; I am like a mother with her son. I endure everything from you, I who was once so haughty and imperious. I who played fast and loose with dukes and princes, and with the aides-de-camp of Charles X.—who were of more importance than all the rest of the court—treat you as a spoiled child. But what good would coquetry do? It would be a dead loss; and yet without coquetry, I can never make you love me,

sir. I know it, I feel it; I am borne along by the influence of an irresistible power; and yet I think that this entire self-abandonment will win me from you that feeling which *he* says all men have for their own property.'

"'WEDNESDAY.

"'Oh! what dark sadness filled my heart when I heard that I must give up the happiness of seeing you yesterday! One thought alone prevented me from running into the arms of death; it was your desire! Not to go to you was to carry out your will, to obey your commands. O, Charles, I looked so pretty! You would have found me more attractive than that lovely German princess whom you wished me to copy, and whom I studied at the Opera. But perhaps you would have thought I was not myself. You have robbed me of all my self-confidence, and perhaps I may be ugly. Oh! I hate myself, and I am crazy when I think how radiant you are. I shall surely lose my senses. Do not laugh at me, and never speak to me of the fickleness of women. If we are fickle, you men must be very strange people! To take away from a poor creature those hours of bliss the anticipation of which had filled her last ten days with happiness, and had made her kind and sweet to all who came to see her! It was because of you that I was good to *him;* but now you do not know the harm you do him. I wonder what new thing I must think of so as not to lose you, or at least to have the right of

seeing you sometimes.—When I reflect that you have never been willing to come here! I should have waited upon you with such exquisite pleasure. There are women who are more favored than I; there are some to whom you say, '*I love you;*' but to me you have only said, '*You are a good girl.*' Although you do not know it, there are certain words of yours that gnaw at my heartstrings. Some clever people occasionally ask me for my thoughts; I am thinking of my abject condition, which is that of the most wretched sinner in presence of her Saviour.'

"There are, as you see, three pages more. La Palférine let me take this letter, and yet it was blotted with tears that seemed still hot! This letter proved to me that La Palférine had spoken the truth. Marcas, who is shy enough with women, was in ecstasies over a similar letter that he had just been reading in another corner of the room, and then used to light his pipe.

"'Every woman who is in love can write like that,' exclaimed La Palférine. 'Love makes them all clever, and gives them a good style; this shows that in France style is the result of ideas and not of words. See how well thought out it is, and how logical is the sentiment!'—

"He then read us another letter, superior in every way to those artificial, labored letters that we novel-writers are always trying to produce.

"One day poor Claudine heard that La Palférine

was in an extremely dangerous position on account of a bill of exchange, and unfortunately took it into her head to carry him an exquisitely embroidered purse that contained a considerable sum of money.

"'How do you dare to meddle in my affairs?' exclaimed La Palférine, angrily. 'Darn my socks and embroider slippers for me if you choose. But—Ah! you want to play the part of a duchess, and you are turning the fable of the Danaë against the aristocracy!'

"As he said this he emptied the purse into his hand, and made a gesture as if he were about to throw the contents in Claudine's face. Claudine was too terrified to take the joke, and, drawing back, she stumbled against a chair and struck her head against a sharp corner of the mantel-piece. The poor woman thought she was dying; and when she found herself stretched on the bed and able to speak, all she said was:

"'It was my fault, Charles.'

"For one moment La Palférine was in despair, and his despair brought back Claudine to life. She was thankful for her accident, and profited by it to make La Palférine accept the gift that was to free him from embarrassment. It was just the reverse of La Fontaine's fable, in which a husband returns thanks to some robbers for having drawn an outburst of tenderness from his wife. The rest of the story will give you an insight into La Palférine's character. Claudine went home and invented the best fiction she could to account for her wound. Then she fell

dangerously ill, and an abscess appeared upon her head. The doctor—Bianchon, I think—yes, it was he—was anxious to cut off Claudine's hair. Her hair is as beautiful as that of the Duchess de Berri and she refused, telling Bianchon in confidence that she could not have it cut without the permission of the Comte de la Palférine. Bianchon went to Charles-Édouard, who listened gravely while the doctor explained the case at length and showed that it was absolutely necessary to cut Claudine's hair in order to perform the operation in safety. Then he exclaimed peremptorily:

"'Cut Claudine's hair! No; I should rather lose her!'

"It is now four years ago, and yet Bianchon still talks about that speech of La Palférine, and we have laughed over it by the half-hour. When Claudine heard the decree she took it as a proof of affection, and believed that she was loved. In spite of her relations in tears and her husband on his knees, she was inexorable, and kept her hair; but the inner power given her by the consciousness of being loved aided the operation, which turned out perfectly successful. There are emotions stronger than the surgeon's skill and the laws of medicine. Claudine wrote a misspelled, unpunctuated, yet charming letter to La Palférine to acquaint him with the happy result of the operation, telling him that love could do more than science.

"'Now,' said La Palférine to us one day, 'how shall I get rid of Claudine?'

"'She is not in your way,' said I; 'she leaves you perfectly free.'

"'That is true,' said La Palférine; 'but I do not wish anything to slip into my life without my consent.'

"From that time on he began to torment Claudine. He had the deepest horror of a bourgeoise, of a woman without a name; he wanted a woman with a title. It was true that Claudine had improved; she dressed like the most distinguished women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; she had acquired an elegance of gait, and walked with chaste, inimitable grace; but that was not enough.—Claudine swallowed all he said because of the praise he gave her.

"'Well,' said La Palférine to her one day, 'if you wish to continue the mistress of poor, penniless, futureless La Palférine, you must at least represent him worthily. You must set up a carriage, footmen in livery, and a title. You must give to my vanity the satisfaction I cannot procure for myself. The woman whom I honor with my notice must never go on foot; if she is splashed with mud, it reflects upon me. That is the way I feel about it. My mistress must be admired by all Paris, and I want all Paris to envy my good luck. When a young fellow sees a brilliant countess roll by in a brilliant equipage, I want him to say, 'Who is the happy man who can call this divine creature his?' and then fall to thinking.—It will double my pleasure.'

"La Palférine has confessed that after having hurled this programme at Claudine's head for the

purpose of getting rid of her, he was overcome for the first and probably the only time in his life.

"'Very well, my friend,' said she, and her voice betrayed the inward tremulousness of her whole being; 'I will accomplish all you require,—or die—'

"She kissed his hand and dropped a few happy tears upon it.

"'I am glad,' she continued, 'that you have explained to me what I must be to remain your mistress.'

"'Then,' La Palférine told us, 'she went out with the light, airy gesture of a happy woman. She stood upon the threshold of my garret, tall and stately as an antique sibyl.'

"All this must give you a sufficient idea of the manners of Bohemia, of which this young *condottiére* is one of the distinguished figures," Nathan went on, after a pause. "Now, I am going on to tell you how I discovered who Claudine really was, and how I was able to understand the terrible truth of part of her letter, which perhaps you did not observe."

The marquise was too much absorbed in thought to laugh, and only said, "Go on." This convinced Nathan that she was much struck by his strange tale, and especially interested in La Palférine.

"Among all the dramatic authors of Paris, in 1829, one of the most noted, intelligent, and respectable was Du Bruel. His name is unknown to the public, as it is given as De Cursy on the playbills. At the time of the Restoration he was in possession of the place of head-clerk in the office of one of the

ministries, but as he was strongly attached to the elder branch of the royal family, he valiantly sent in his resignation. Since then he has written twice as many plays, to compensate for the deficit in his income caused by his noble conduct. Du Bruel was then forty years old, and his life is known to you. Like some other authors, he was in love with an actress, and it was one of those affections that no one can explain, yet which are well known to the whole literary world. The woman, as you are aware, is Tullia, who used to be one of the first dancers at the Royal Academy of Music. Tullia is not her real name, any more than De Cursy is Du Bruel's. For ten years—from 1817 to 1827—this girl shone conspicuously on the boards of the Opera. Her accomplishments were not of a high order, and her talent was mediocre; but she was pretty, and cleverer than dancers usually are; she refused to join in the virtuous reform that ruined the ballet, and continued the Guimard dynasty. She owed her ascendancy, also, to her distinguished protectors: to the Duc de Rhétoré, son of the Duc de Chaulieu; to the influence of a celebrated director of the fine arts; to diplomats and rich foreigners. During the zenith of her fame she had a little house in Rue Chauchat, and lived after the manner of the opera nymphs of those days. Du Bruel fell in love with her, toward 1823, when the passion of the Duc de Rhétoré was on the wane. As he was but a deputy head-clerk, he was forced to tolerate the director of the fine arts, and he believed himself the favored one. This new

connection became, after six years, almost a marriage. Tullia carefully concealed her origin, and it was only known that she came from Nanterre. One of her uncles, who was formerly a plain carpenter or mason, had become, it was said, a rich master builder, thanks to her recommendations and generous loans. Du Bruel once committed the indiscretion of saying that Tullia would be sure to inherit a fine property sooner or later. The master builder was not married, and had a weakness for his niece, to whom he was under obligations.

"'He has not wit enough to be ungrateful,' she used to say.

"In 1829 Tullia retired of her own accord. She was thirty years old, and knew that she was growing stouter; she had tried in vain to act in pantomime, but she only knew how to make her skirts fly out well, and display her person to the public, as she pirouetted in the style of Noblet. Old Vestris had said to her in the beginning that when this trick was well executed, and the dancers sufficiently denuded, it was worth all imaginable talents. It is to the dancer what the chest-tone is to the singer. Therefore, he said, the celebrated dancers, Camargo, Guimard, and Taglioni, who were all dark, thin, and ugly, needed genius to succeed. Tullia had the wisdom to withdraw, in her full glory, before the younger girls who were more agile than herself; and as she had but slightly departed from her aristocratic standard in the connections she had formed, she was unwilling to defile her shoes in the mire of the July

government. The proud and beautiful Claudine carried away with her fine souvenirs and little money; but she had also magnificent jewels and some of the finest furniture in Paris. She who was then so famous, though forgotten to-day, left the Opera possessed with but one idea, and that was to make Du Bruel marry her. You must know that she is now Madame du Bruel, although the marriage has not been made public. How does a woman of that sort make a man marry her after seven or eight years of intimacy? What springs does she push, and what machinery does she set in motion? But however amusing such an interior drama may be, it is no concern of ours. It is a fact that Du Bruel married her secretly. Before his marriage, Cursy's friends thought him a good fellow: he did not invariably go home at night, and was somewhat of a Bohemian in his habits; he was always ready for a supper or a party of pleasure, and enjoyed going to rehearsals at the Opéra-Comique, and he used to turn up, without knowing exactly how, at Dieppe, Baden, and Saint-Germain. He gave dinners, lived the influential, extravagant life of most authors, journalists, and artists, asserted his rights as an author in all the green-rooms of Paris, and belonged to our own set. Finot, Lousteau, Du Tillet, Desroches, Bixiou, Blondet, Couture, and des Lupeaulx upheld him in spite of the dull pedantic air and bureaucratic habits that hung about him. But, once married, Tullia made a slave of Du Bruel. What else can you expect? The poor devil loved

her. Tullia told him that she had left the Opera so that she might be all his, and make him a sweet and faithful wife. She succeeded in securing a reception from the most rigid of the Jansenist ladies of the Du Bruel family. She passed long, dull hours at Madame de Bonfalot's, though nobody, at first, could guess why; she made valuable presents to the old and miserly Madame de Chissé, her great-aunt, and even spent a whole summer with this lady, never missing a single mass. There in the country, under her aunt's eyes, she confessed, received absolution and the sacrament. The next winter she said to us: 'You understand? I shall have aunts who are really mine.'

"She was so overjoyed to become a bourgeoise, and to give up her independence, that she found means to lead up to her end. She flattered the old people. She went every day, on foot, to sit for two hours with Du Bruel's mother, when she was ill. Du Bruel was dazzled by wiles that were worthy of Madame de Maintenon, and his admiration for his wife never flagged. He was so securely bound that he never felt his chains. Claudine gave him to understand that the elastic system of a bourgeoise government, dynasty, and court alone reconciled a Tullia who had become Madame du Bruel to taking part in society, which she had formerly had the good sense to refuse to enter by force. She was satisfied with being received at the houses of Madame de Bonfalot, Madame de Chissé, and Madame du Bruel, where she posed most consistently

as a sober, simple, and virtuous woman. Three years later she was also received by their friends.

"'Yet I cannot believe that the young Madame du Bruel ever displayed her legs and arms to all Paris, before the footlights!' was the artless remark of Madame Anselme Popinot.

"The monarchy of July, 1830, in this respect resembles the Empire; for Napoléon used to receive at court a woman who had once been a chambermaid, and was then Madame Garat, wife of the great judge. Our ex-dancer had broken off completely with her former companions, as you may imagine, and she never recognized any one of her old acquaintances who might compromise her. After her marriage she had hired, in Rue de la Victoire, a charming little house with a court-yard and garden, which she fitted up with reckless extravagance, and filled with the finest bits of her own and Du Bruel's furniture. She sold everything she thought ordinary or commonplace. To find an example of luxury bewildering as hers, we must return to the times of Guimard, Sophie Arnould, and Duthé, who devoured princely fortunes in their day. How far did this luxurious life at home influence Du Bruel? The question, delicate to put, is yet more delicate to answer. I shall tell you of a single circumstance that will give you some idea of Tullia's whims. The coverlet of her bed was made of English point-lace, and was worth ten thousand francs. It came to Claudine's ears that a famous actress had one like it, and after that she invited a magnificent Angora

cat to get up on her bed. This anecdote shows what kind of woman she was. Du Bruel dared not interfere, and, moreover, received orders to publish this challenge that was offered to the luxury of the *other* women. Tullia thought much of the Duc de Rhétoré's gift; but one day, five years after her marriage, she romped so violently with her cat that the coverlet was torn, and she was obliged to cut it into veils, flounces, and other trimmings. She replaced it by a common-sense coverlet that was really a coverlet, and not merely a proof of the madness peculiar to those women who, as a journalist once said, revenge themselves by insane extravagance for having lived on raw apples in their childhood. The day that the coverlet was rent in shreds marked a new era in the household. Cursy was distinguished by his fierce activity. Nobody suspects to what Paris owes the vaudeville of the eighteenth century that invaded its theatres tricked out in powder and patches. The real origin of the thousand and one plays, with which the critics have found so much fault, lies in the express determination of Madame du Bruel, who insisted that her husband should buy the house on which she had spent so much money, and which contained furniture to the value of five hundred thousand francs. For what reason? Tullia never explains; she is perfect mistress of a woman's sovereign answer, *because*.

"'De Cursy has been much laughed at,' said she; 'but, after all, he owes this house to the rouge box,

the powder-puff and the tinseled dresses of the eighteenth century. He would never have thought of it but for me,' she added, sinking back into her cushions beside the fire.

"She said this after our return from a first performance of one of Du Bruel's plays, which had been successful, and which she foresaw would receive an avalanche of criticism. Tullia was receiving her friends. She gave a tea every Monday, and her company was the most select she could get. She neglected nothing that could make her house attractive: there were card-tables in one room, and conversation in another; and in a third and larger drawing-room she sometimes gave concerts, which were always short, and to which she admitted only the most eminent artistes. Her good sense enabled her to acquire exquisite tact—a quality which probably gave her great ascendancy over Du Bruel; and, moreover, the playwright felt for her the kind of love that habit gradually renders indispensable to a man's existence. Every day adds a link to that fine, strong, irresistible chain, which imprisons in its coils the most airy inclinations and fleeting affections, and, binding them together, keeps a man tied hand and foot, heart and soul. Tullia understood De Cursy perfectly; she knew where to wound him, and how to heal the wound she had made. To any observer—even to one as proud of his experience as I—a passion of this sort is a bottomless abyss, the depths of which are lost in mystery, and even the best-lighted parts of which are

dim. De Cursy, an old author worn out by his life in the green-room, loved his ease; he loved his luxurious, profuse, and easy life; he liked being a king at home, and receiving his literary friends in a house that was furnished sumptuously as a palace, and filled with choice works of modern art. Tullia allowed Du Bruel to hold sway over a crowd of people, among whom were journalists that were easy to conciliate; and, thanks to her receptions and his own judicious loans, Cursy was not too violently assailed by the critics, and his plays were a success. He would not have separated from Tullia for a kingdom. He might even have forgiven her a breach of faith, provided that he met with no diminution in his accustomed comforts; but, strange to say, he had no fears for Tullia on this score. It was not known that the former danseuse had had any fancies; and, if it had been so, she would have kept up appearances.

"'My dear sir,' said Du Bruel to us, on the boulevard, with the gravity of a doctor, 'there is nothing like marrying a woman who has been cured of her passions by the very abuse she has made of them. Women like Claudine have sown their wild oats; they have tasted their fill of pleasure, and they make the most adorable wives a man could wish; they are well trained; they know everything, and are inured to everything; they are no prudes, and consequently are indulgent to others. So I advocate marrying *a remnant of a thoroughbred*. I am the happiest man on earth!'

"Du Bruel told me this before Bixiou.

"'My dear fellow,' said Bixiou to me, 'perhaps he is better off for being in the wrong.'

"A week later Du Bruel begged us to come and dine with him on a Tuesday. I went, on the morning of the same day, to consult him on some business connected with the theatre, that had been entrusted to us by a committee of dramatic authors. We were about to go out together; but he first asked permission to enter Claudine's apartment, into which he never penetrated without knocking.

"'We live like great people,' said he, smiling. 'Everybody's liberty is respected here.'

"We were admitted. Du Bruel said to Claudine:

"'I have invited some friends for to-day—'

"'There!' cried she; 'you invite people without consulting me, and treat me like a mere nobody.—Wait a moment,' said she, and her look appealed to me to judge between them. 'When a man has been foolish enough to marry a woman like me, for, after all, I was an opera-dancer—and though everybody else forgets it, I must never forget it—well, such a man, if he is clever, will raise his wife in public esteem by pretending to acknowledge her superiority, and he will justify his course by recognizing her remarkable qualities. The best means of making others respect her is to pay her respect at home, and allow her to be absolute mistress there. Oh! it is enough to cure me of my conceit to see how much afraid he is of appearing to listen to me! I must be extraordinarily in the right for him to make me a single concession.'

"Every sentence of hers was contradicted by a gesture from Du Bruel.

"'No, no,' she continued, warmly, as she caught sight of her husband's gestures. 'Du Bruel, my dear, I know what I am talking about, for I was queen in my own house all my life long, before I married you. Every desire I had was watched for, and immediately fulfilled.—After all, I am thirty-five years old, and a woman who is thirty-five cannot expect to be loved. Oh, if I were only sixteen again, and had the beauty that sells so dear at the Opera, how devoted you would be to me, Monsieur du Bruel!

"'I have a sovereign contempt for a man who boasts of loving a woman and yet is not attentive to her little wants. Look here, Du Bruel; you are mean and wretched, and you like to torment a woman because you cannot show your power over anybody else. Napoléon may be subject to his mistress, and he loses nothing of his greatness; but you would think yourself a nobody if you allowed yourself to be ruled. Thirty-five years old, my dear,' said she, turning to me — 'that is the key to the riddle.—You see he will not give in yet.—You know that I am really thirty-seven; and I am very sorry, but you must tell your friends that you will take them to the *Rocher de Cancale*. I could give them a dinner, but I don't wish to do so, and they must not come. My poor little soliloquy will impress upon your memory the salutary precept of *everybody's liberty being respected*. That is our charter,'

she added, with a smile, and a return to the gay and capricious manner of an opera-dancer.

"'Very well, my dear little pet,' said Du Bruel; 'there, there; don't be angry. We know how to get on together.'

"He kissed her hand, and went out with me in a fury. This is what he said to me as we walked from the Rue de la Victoire to the boulevard, if there be expressions which can be printed strong enough, and oaths violent enough to represent the outrageous words and malignant thoughts that streamed from his mouth as a waterfall issues from a mighty torrent:

"'I tell you, sir, I will leave that low, infamous dancer; that old top that has spun under the whip of all the operatic airs that ever were made; that vixen; that wanton vagabond! You, too, have fallen in love with an actress; but never take it into your head to marry your mistress. I tell you it is a punishment that Dante forgot to put in his hell! I will beat her; I will give her such a thrashing! I will tell her what she is. She is the poison of my life; she keeps me bobbing like a jumping-jack.'

"He had reached the boulevard, and was in such a state of wrath that the words stuck in his throat.

"'I should like to stamp upon her!'

"'Why?' I asked.

"'My dear sir, you could never guess the thousand myriad whims the hussy has! When I want to stay at home, she wants to go out; when I want to go out, she wants me to stay at home. She

overwhelms me with reasons, reproaches, arguments, invectives, and a flood of words fit to drive me mad. She thinks her caprices all right and mine all wrong. I may cut her short with a word, and she stops and looks at me as if I were a dead dog. Any peace I may have had can only be accounted for by my absolute servility, and by my fawning on her like a pet spaniel. She asks too high prices for the little she has to sell me. The devil! I will leave her everything and go and bury myself in an attic. Oh! for an attic and freedom! It is five years since I have dared to have my own way!'

"Instead of going to notify his friends of the change of plan, Cursy kept striding along the asphalt of the boulevard, from the Rue de Richelieu to the Rue du Mont-Blanc, giving way to the most furious curses and ludicrous exaggerations. He was, in the street, a victim to a paroxysm of rage that contrasted strongly with the calmness of his manner at home. His walk gradually soothed the irritation of his nerves and lulled the tempest in his soul. Towards two o'clock, yielding to one of his ungoverned impulses, he exclaimed: 'Those damned women don't know their own minds. I lay my head to wager that if I go home and tell her that I have let my friends know we are to dine at the *Rocher de Cancale*, she will be no longer pleased with her own arrangement. But,' he went on, 'she will have already decamped. Perhaps there is an engagement on foot with some coxcomb or other. No, I don't think so, for she really loves me at heart.'

"Ah! Madame," said Nathan, with a shrewd glance at the marquise, who could not help smiling, "women and prophets alone can make a true use of faith."

"Du Bruel," he continued, "took me home with him. We walked slowly, and it was three o'clock when we reached there. Before we went upstairs he noticed that somebody was stirring in the kitchen; he entered it, and saw preparations there that made him wink at me as he questioned the cook.

"'Madame ordered dinner,' she answered; 'afterwards she dressed and called a carriage; then she changed her mind and sent away the carriage, ordering it to come back in time for the play.'

"'Well,' cried Du Bruel, 'what did I tell you?'

"We entered the apartment on tip-toe. There was nobody there. We passed from room to room, till we came to a boudoir, where we caught Tullia weeping. She dried her tears quite openly, saying to Du Bruel:

"'Send to the *Rocher de Cancale* to let your guests know that they are to dine here.'

"She was dressed in a gown which no actress could have invented: elegant and harmonious in color and shape, simply cut, and made of some well-chosen stuff that was neither too expensive nor too common. It had nothing of that showy exaggeration that fools are prone to call artistic. In short, she had a refined air. At the age of thirty-seven, Tullia had reached the most attractive phase of a Frenchwoman's beauty. The admirable oval of her

face was, at that moment, divinely pale; she had taken off her hat, and I observed the light down, like the bloom of a fruit, that softened the tender and delicate outlines of her cheek. Her face, framed in its braids of blond hair, had a melancholy grace about it. Her sparkling gray eyes were dimmed with a mist of tears. I read some violent emotion in the quivering nostrils of the little nose, that was beautiful as a perfect Roman cameo; in the slightly swollen veins of her long and queen-like throat; in the small mouth, still child-like in its expression. The momentary reddening of her chin told of her secret despair; her ears burned at the tips, and her gloved hands were trembling. The nervous contraction of her eyebrows betrayed her anguish. She was sublime. Du Bruel was crushed by her speech to him. She turned on us the piercing, inscrutable, and cat-like gaze that none but women of fashion and actresses possess; then she stretched out her hand to Du Bruel.

"'Poor fellow!' said she; 'you had no sooner gone than I reproached myself a thousand times. I accused myself of base ingratitude, and I saw how unkind I had been.— Was I very wicked?' she asked, turning to me.— 'Why should I not receive your friends?' she resumed. 'Are you not in your own house? Should you like to know the secret of all this? To tell the truth, I was afraid that you did not love me. I was wavering between repentance and the mortification of giving in. Then I read the papers and saw there was to be a first performance

at the Variétés, so it occurred to me that you wanted to entertain a colleague. Left to myself, I was very silly, and dressed, so that I might go after you —poor dear!'

"Du Bruel threw me a victorious glance; he had entirely forgotten his harangue *against Tullia*.

"'Well, my angel,' said he, 'I never told anybody of the change of plan.'

"'How well we understand each other!' she cried.

"As she was uttering these gracious words I remarked a little note she wore tucked in her belt; but I needed no such token to satisfy myself that Tullia's vagaries were occasioned by occult causes. I believe that, next to a child, a woman is the most logical being that exists. They both present the sublime phenomenon of the constant triumph of a single idea. A child's idea changes from minute to minute; but he is interested solely and so passionately in that one idea that everybody gives way before him, fascinated by the ingenuousness and persistence of his desire. A woman is less variable; to call her capricious is an ignorant affront. She always acts under the mastery of some passion, and it is wonderful how she makes of that passion the centre of society and the whole universe.

"Tullia exerted her fascinations on Du Bruel, and drew him into her toils; the sky cleared, and the evening was delightful. The clever playwright never knew the secret sorrow that lurked in his wife's heart.

"'My dear sir,' he said to me, 'such is life: contradictions, contrasts!'

"'Especially when they are all genuine,' I answered.

"'I think so,' he resumed. 'I should die of dulness without some violent emotion. Ah! that woman has power to move me!'

"After dinner we went to the Variétés; but before leaving, I slipped into Du Bruel's room and found on a shelf, among some waste papers, a number of an advertising-sheet which contained the announcement—required for paying off a mortgage—of the contract for the house Du Bruel had bought. A light burst upon me as I read these words: '*At the request of Jean-François du Bruel and of Claudine Chaffaroux, his wife;*' I understood it all. I gave Claudine my arm, and allowed everybody to pass on their way downstairs before us. When we were alone I said:

"'If I were La Palférine, I should always keep my appointments.'

"She placed her finger gravely on her lips, and pressed my arm as we went down together. I saw in her eyes that she was pleased to think that I knew La Palférine. Can you guess what her first idea was? She wanted to make a spy of me; but I answered her with a repartee from Bohemia.

"A month later I happened to be with her as we were coming out from the first performance of one of Du Bruel's plays; it was raining, and I ran to call a cab. We had lingered a few minutes at the

theatre, and there were no more carriages to be had at the entrance. Claudine scolded Du Bruel; and when we finally rolled off in a carriage on our way to Florine—to whose house she was taking me—she kept up the quarrel, and rated him in the most humiliating terms.

"'What is the matter?' I asked.

"'My dear fellow, she is finding fault with me for letting you run after the cab, and makes that an excuse for wanting to set up a carriage.'

"'When I was the first dancer at the opera,' said she, 'my feet never touched anything but the boards. If you had the slightest feeling, you would write four plays more a year. You would be sure of their success if you thought what you could do with the proceeds, and that your wife need no longer wade through the mud. It is a shame that I have to ask for such a thing; you should be able to guess the perpetual annoyance I have suffered for the last five years that I have been married!'

"'I am willing,' answered Du Bruel, 'but we shall be ruined.'

"'If you get into debt,' said she, 'you can pay everything with my uncle's property.'

"'It would be like you to leave me the debts and to keep the property.'

"'If that is the way you take me,' said she, 'I have nothing further to say. Such a speech from you will keep my mouth shut.'

"Du Bruel immediately launched into excuses and professions of affection, but she would not

answer him. She let him take her hands, but they were cold as a dead woman's. Tullia was a proficient in playing the corpse-like rôle women sometimes assume when they wish to prove to you that they will never consent to your wishes, that they have shut you out from their soul, heart, and life, and think themselves treated like beasts of burden. No policy is more successful in wounding a loving heart; but a woman can only employ it against a man that adores her.

"'Do you suppose,' she asked me, contemptuously, 'that a count would have offered me such an insult, even if it came into his head to do so? Unfortunately for me, I have lived with dukes, ambassadors, and noblemen, and I know their ways. That makes this middle-class life intolerable to me! After all, a playwright cannot be like Rastignac or Rhétoré—'

"Du Bruel turned pale. Two days afterwards he and I met in the lobby of the Opera; we strolled about together, and fell to talking of Tullia.

"'You must not take seriously all the nonsense I talked on the boulevard,' said he; 'I have a quick temper.'

"The next two winters I went often to Du Bruel's house, and watched Claudine's tactics with particular attention. She had a well-appointed carriage, and Du Bruel threw himself into politics. She made him abjure his royalist views; he recanted, and obtained a position in the administration to which he had formerly belonged. She made him canvass for the

votes of the National Guard, and he was elected chief of a battalion. He behaved with so much spirit in a riot that he rose to the rank of an officer in the Legion of Honor; he was appointed maître des requêstês and chief of a division. Tullia's uncle—old Chaffaroux—died, leaving forty thousand francs a year, nearly his whole fortune, to his niece. Du Bruel was made deputy; but in order to avoid a re-election, he managed first to get himself named Counselor of State and director. He republished his treatises on archæology, his works on statistics, and two political pamphlets, which became the pretext for his nomination to one of the obliging academies of the Institute. At present he is commander of the Legion of Honor, and has been so actively engaged in the intrigues of the Chamber of Deputies that he has just been named peer of France and made a count. He has not ventured as yet to make use of his title, but his wife puts on her cards *La Comtesse du Bruel.* The former playwright has received the Order of Léopold, the Order of Isabelle, the Cross of Saint-Wladimir, of the Second Class, the Order of Civil Merit of Bavaria, the Papal Order of the Golden Spur; in fact, he has the great Cross and all the lesser ones besides. Three months ago Claudine drove up to La Palférine's door in her superb carriage emblazoned with armorial bearings. Du Bruel is the grandson of a farmer of the revenue who was ennobled toward the end of the reign of Louis XIV.; his coat of arms has been composed by Chérin, and the count's coronet is not amiss in his

insignia, which bear no trace of imperial vulgarity. Thus, in three years' time, Claudine had fulfilled the conditions of the programme imposed by the gay and charming La Palférine. One day, a month later, in all her glory, and dressed like a true countess of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, she climbed the stairs of the wretched house where her lover lodged. When she reached our friend's attic, he said to her:

"'I know that you have been made a peeress, but it is too late, Claudine. Everybody tells me of the Southern Cross, and I want to *see it.*'

"'I will get it for you,' said she.

"La Palférine burst into a Homeric laugh.

"'I am sure I don't want a mistress who is stupid as an owl, and who flaps her wings from the green-room to the court. I should rather see you at court without a title.'

"'What is the Southern Cross?' she asked me, with sad humility.

"I was overcome with admiration for the dauntlessness of true love, that, in real life, no less than in the realms of an artless fairy-tale, is ready to clamber over precipices to obtain the singing flower or the roc's egg. I explained to her that the Southern Cross was a mass of nebulous matter, in the shape of a cross, and more brilliant than the Milky Way, which was only to be seen from the southern seas.

"'Very well, Charles,' she said to him, 'let us go there.'

"In spite of his cruel disposition, La Palférine's eyes filled with tears; but how touching were the look and accent of Claudine! I never knew anything that could be compared to her behavior, in the most remarkable performances of the great actors I have seen. As she caught sight of La Palférine's eyes, usually so inexorable, but now filled with tears, she fell upon her knees and kissed the hand of her merciless lover. He raised her and assuming his grand manner, that he called the manner of the *Rusticoli,* he said to her:

"'Come, my dear, I will do something for you. I will put you in—my will!'"

"Now," said Nathan to Madame de Rochefide, in conclusion, "I cannot make out whether Du Bruel is deceived or not. There can certainly be nothing droller or stranger than to see a reckless young man controlling a house and family. His slightest caprices rule the household, and countermand its most serious resolutions. You may be sure that the circumstance of the dinner has been repeated a thousand times, and in concerns of a far more important nature. Yet, without his wife's whims, Du Bruel would still be De Cursy, one among five hundred other playwrights; whereas he is now in the Chamber of Peers—"

"You will change the names, I hope," said Nathan to Madame de la Baudraye.

"I should think so! I gave the characters names for you only. My dear Nathan," whispered she in the poet's ear, "I know another family in which the wife acts the part of Du Bruel."

"And what is the catastrophe?" asked Lousteau, who came in just as Madame de la Baudraye was finishing her story.

"I do not believe in catastrophes," said Madame de la Baudraye, "though it is sometimes necessary to invent them to prove that art is strong as chance; but, my dear friend, we only read a story on account of its details."

"Still, there is a catastrophe," said Nathan.

"What is it?" asked Madame de la Baudraye.

"The Marquise de Rochefide is fascinated with Charles-Édouard. My tale has aroused her curiosity."

"Oh, poor thing! how unlucky!" cried Madame de la Baudraye.

"No, not so unlucky," said Nathan, "for Maxime de Trailles and La Palférine have made the marquis quarrel with Madame Schontz, and are going to reconcile Arthur and Beatrix."—See *Beatrix*.

1839–1845.

GAUDISSART II.

A PARADOX

Finally, after ten minutes, the prince is consulted; he sees the two duchesses struggling with a thousand uncertainties between the two finest of these, because at the outset one had been laid aside. The prince, without ceasing his reading, does not look at the bracelet; he examines the clerk.

"Which would you choose for your sweetheart?" he asks.

TO MADAME LA PRINCESSE CRISTINA DE BELGIOJOSO
NÉE TRIVULCE

GAUDISSART II.

*

To know how to sell, to be able to sell, and to sell! The public is not aware how much Paris owes its greatness to these three phases of the same question. The display at the stores as rich as the salons of the nobility before 1789, the splendor of the cafés, which often surpasses, easily, those of the new Versailles; the poems in display, destroyed each evening and reconstructed each morning; the elegance and grace of the young men when talking with the purchasers, the piquant faces and the toilets of the young girls who endeavor to attract the shoppers, and lastly, in more recent times, the recesses, the immense spaces and Babylonian luxury of the passages where the merchants bring together their specialties, all this is nothing—it still remains to please the most greedy and blasé organ of man since Roman days—the requirements of which has developed beyond all bounds, thanks to the most refined civilization. This organ is *the eye of the Parisian!*—This eye sees fireworks which cost a hundred thousand francs, palaces five-eighths of a mile in length by a height of sixty feet, in many colored glasses, fairylands at fourteen theatres every evening, renewed panoramas, continual expositions of master-pieces, people both sad and gay promenading

on the boulevards or going to and fro in the streets, encyclopedias of carnival rags, twenty illustrated works a year, a thousand caricatures, ten thousand pictures, lithographs and engravings. This eye sees by fifteen thousand francs' worth of gas every evening; and lastly, to satisfy it, the city of Paris expends annually some millions in observatories and cultivated spaces. And this is not enough!—this is only one side of the question. This is yet, we believe, little in comparison to the intelligence, and diplomacy worthy of Molière, employed by the sixty thousand clerks and forty thousand young women who beset the shoppers' purse, as myriads of whitebait would seize upon pieces of bread floating on the waters of the Seine.

Gaudissart at his place of business is at least equal in capacity, intellect, wit and philosophy to the illustrious traveling salesman who has become the type of his class. Away from his store he is like a balloon without gas; and only owes his greatness to his surroundings, the same as an actor who is only sublime in his theatre. Although compared with other merchant clerks of Europe, the French salesman is better instructed, as it is necessary for him to speak about asphalt, the ball Mabille, the polka, literature, the most noted books, railways, politics, the news of the Chamber of Deputies and Revolutions. He is so much confused when he leaves his springing-board, his yard-stick and his trade and his politeness to order; but, there, governed by the rigid rules of the store, he talks glibly with an eye to

business, and, with the shawl in his hand, he eclipses the great Talleyrand; he has more wit than Désaugiers, more finesse than Cleopatra, equals Monrose, and outdoes Molière. At home Talleyrand would have played Gaudissart, but in his shop, Gaudissart would have played Talleyrand.

Let us explain this paradox by an instance:

Two pretty duchesses chatted at the side of an illustrious prince; they wished a bracelet. They awaited a clerk, with bracelets, from one of the most celebrated jewelers of Paris. He arrives bringing three marvelous samples; in comparing them the two women hesitated to choose! It is the flash of intelligence. Hesitate—you are lost. Taste has not two inspirations. Finally, after ten minutes, the prince is consulted; he sees the two duchesses struggling with a thousand uncertainties between the two finest of these, because at the outset one had been laid aside. The prince, without ceasing his reading, does not look at the bracelet; he examines the clerk.

"Which would you choose for your sweetheart?" he asks.

The young man points to one of the jewels.

"In that case take the other; you will gain the good-will of two women," said the most finished of modern diplomats; "and, young man, give it in my name to your happy sweetheart."

The two pretty ladies smiled and the clerk retired, as much flattered by the present the prince had given him as by the good opinion he has of him.

A woman descends from a handsome equipage, which stops at the Rue Vivienne, before one of those sumptuous stores where shawls are sold; she is accompanied by another woman. There are usually two together on these expeditions. Almost always, as in this instance, they walk through ten stores before buying, and amuse themselves, when going from one to another, with the efforts of the clerks. Let us find out which is the smarter, the buyer or the seller? which of the two comes out the better in this farce?

When an attempt is made to depict the greatest triumph of Parisian trade, the sale! it is necessary to give an example to illustrate the subject. Now in this case the shawl or chatelaine worth three thousand francs would cause more excitement than the price of batiste, or the dress worth three hundred francs. But, oh, strangers to both sides! however much you may believe of this statement, know that this scene is enacted in the fashionable stores for barége at two francs as well as for muslin at four francs a yard!

Princesses and ordinary people, how can you distrust this fine young man, with cheeks like velvet and the color of a peach, two honest eyes, and who is nearly as well dressed as your—your cousin, and endowed with a voice as soft as the fleecy wool he shows you? There are three or four like him. One, with black eyes, says to you: "See there!" with an imperial air. The other has timid and submissive blue eyes which make you say to

yourself: "Poor fellow! he is not born for business."—A third has light chestnut hair, a yellow, laughing eye, pleasant manners, is gifted with activity and southern jollity. A fourth, with a fawn-colored, fan-shaped beard, is stiff as a communist, severe, imposing, with a frightful cravat, and of few words.

These different kinds of clerks, who respond to the principal characters of women, are the strength of their employer, a large, good-natured, generous person, whose forehead runs far back, and who has a paunch like a ministerial delegate, and is sometimes decorated with the badge of the Legion of Honor received for maintaining the supremacy of French trade, who presents an outline of pleasing roundness, has a wife, children, a house in the country and a bank account. This personage descends in the workshop as the *Deus ex machina*, when any disturbances need to be adjusted. Thus the women are surrounded by good nature, youth, graciousness, smiles, pleasantries, all that civilization can offer the most simple, the most specious, and all arranged by delicate gradations suiting every taste.

A word about the physical effects of optics, of architecture, of decoration; a brief word, decisive, terrible; a word which has made for itself a place in history. The book within which you read this instructive page is sold at No. 76 in the Rue de Richelieu, in an elegant shop, white and gold, hung with red velvet, and which has a room in the entresol where the broad daylight comes in through Rue

de Ménars, as it would in a studio, clear, pure and unobstructed, always the same. What passer-by has not admired *le Persan*, that King of Asia, which is situated at the corner of the Rue de la Bourse and Rue de Richelieu, charged with saying *urbi et orbi:* "I reign more tranquilly here than at Lahore." During five hundred years this carving at the corner of these two streets might have occupied archæologists without this immortal analysis, in making illustrated quarto volumes about it, like those by Monsieur Quatremère on the Olympian Jupiter, which would show that Napoléon had been a small personage in some country of the East before being Emperor of the French. Be that as it may, this elegant store laid siege to this poor little entresol and by force of bank notes become possessed of it. LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE has yielded the place to the Comédie of Cashmeres. *Le Persan* has sacrificed some diamonds from his crown to obtain all this necessary light. This ray of sunlight increases the sales a hundred per cent, because of its effect on colors; its brings in relief all the beauties of the shawls, this bewitching light, this golden ray! By this fact, judge of the attention given to arranging the stores of Paris!—

Let us return to these young people, to this decorated quadragenarian, entertained at the table of the King of France, to this head-clerk with the reddish beard, with the aristocratic air. These accomplished Gaudissarts deal with a thousand caprices a week, they know all the vibrations of the

purse-strings in the hearts of women. When a lorette, a quiet lady, a young matron, a fashionable woman, a duchess, a middle-class person, a boldfaced dancer, a pure young girl, or a very innocent stranger appears, each is immediately analyzed by these seven or eight men who have studied them from the moment of their entrance, and who station themselves at the windows, at the counter, at the door, at a corner, and in the centre of the store, with a holiday air, as if contemplating a free-and-easy Sunday: which makes one ask one's self, "Of what are they thinking?" A woman's purse, her wishes, her intentions, her fancies are better found out there in one moment than the custom-house officers could search a suspected coach on the frontier in seven quarters of an hour. These intelligent dogs play seriously the staid old man, having seen everything in detail; the almost invisible imprint of a muddy boot, the least shabbiness, a mussed or badly chosen hat ribbon, the cut and fashion of a dress, the newness of the gloves, a dress cut by the skilful scissors of Victorine IV., the jewel of Froment-Meurice, the fashionable trinket, and finally all that goes to show in a woman, her station, her fortune, and her character. Tremble, then! Never has this sanhedrim of Gaudissarts, directed by its employer, been mistaken. Then the thoughts of each are transmitted by glances from one to the other with the quickness of the telegraph, by means of a nervous twitching, smiles, movements of the lips, which, observing, you would say that their thoughts lighted up the clerk's

eyes, like the sudden lighting of the Champs-Elysées, where the gas flies from candelabra to candelabra.

And, if it is an English lady, immediately the solemn, mysterious and unlucky salesman advances, like one of Lord Byron's romantic characters.

If it is a middle-class person, the most experienced clerk is sent to her; he shows her a hundred shawls in a quarter of an hour, and bewilders her with the colors and designs; he unfolds as many shawls as a hawk makes curves before descending upon a rabbit; and at the end of half an hour she is so troubled that she does not know what to choose, and the worthy bourgeoise, humored in all her fancies, refers to the clerk, who places her on the horns of the dilemma by the equal beauties of two shawls.

"This one, madame, is very fine; it is apple-green, the fashionable color, but the fashion changes; so much so that this one—the black and white which is in great demand—will last you much longer, and it will go with all toilets."

This is the *A B C* of the profession.

It is almost impossible to believe how much eloquence is necessary in this wretched business. Finally the chief salesman of the establishment said, while speaking with two of his friends, Duronceret and Bixiou, who had come to have him select a shawl for them, "Stay, you are discreet artists; you can cater to the tastes of our employer, who certainly is the most difficult man to please whom I have seen. I do not speak as a merchant. Monsieur

Fritot is the first; for, as a dealer, he has invented the Selim shawl, *a shawl impossible to sell*, and which we always dispose of. We keep in a cedar-wood box loosely, but folded in satin, a shawl of five or six hundred francs, a shawl sent by Selim to the Emperor Napoléon. This shawl is our treasure, we show it as a last resort: *if it sells there are yet more.*"

At this moment an English lady descends from her cab and appears in all the stolidity peculiar to England and to anything from there which is supposed to be alive. She looked like the statue of a commander walking by sudden lurches.

"The Englishwoman," he whispered to Bixiou. "This is our Battle of Waterloo. We have women who slip through our fingers like eels, and who, having got as far as the stairs, are persuaded to return; the dashing women who *joke* with us, one laughs at them and takes them on credit; indescribable strangers who have shawls sent to their houses and whom it is necessary to flatter. But the English! It is like attacking the bronze statue of Louis XIV. These women make shopping an occupation and take pleasure in bargaining. They make us alert!"

The romantic clerk comes forward.

"Does madame wish an Indian or French shawl; high-priced or—?"

"I will see."

"What amount does madame wish to spend?"

"I will see."

Returning to get the shawls and lay them on a rail, the clerk throws a glance to his colleagues, signifying "What a bore!" accompanied by an imperceptible movement of the shoulders.

"These are our best quality in Indian red, in blue and in orange; all are ten thousand francs. These are five thousand, and those others three thousand."

The Englishwoman, in a gloomily indifferent manner, gazes at first all around her before looking at the three specimens exhibited, without giving the slightest sign of approval or disapproval.

"Have you others?" she asked.

"Yes, madame. But perhaps madame has not decided to buy a shawl to-day?"

"Fully decided."

And the clerk departs to find shawls of less price; but he shows them solemnly as things of which one seems to say: "Look at these magnificent creations!"

"These are much dearer," said he; "they have not been used; they have come by couriers, and bought directly from the makers at Lahore."

"Oh! I understand," she said; "they suit me very much better."

The clerk remained serious, notwithstanding his interior irritation, which prepossessed Duronceret and Bixiou. The Englishwoman, always cool as water-cress, seemed happy in her stolidity.

"How much is it?" she asked, showing a shawl of heavenly blue, covered with birds nestling in the pagodas.

"Seven thousand francs."

She took the shawl and put it around her, and looking in the glass said, in returning it:

"No, I do not like it."

Fully a quarter of an hour passed in these fruitless efforts.

"We have nothing more, madame," said the clerk, looking at his employer.

"Madame, like all persons of taste, is difficult to please," said the head of the establishment advancing with all the graces of the shopkeeper, and agreeable mixture of pretentiousness and coaxing.

The Englishwoman surveyed him, through her glass, from head to foot, without wishing to see that this man was an eligible person and dined at the Tuileries.

"There is yet one shawl, but I never show it," he said; "no one has found it to her taste; it is very odd; and this morning, I thought of giving it to my wife: we have had it since 1805; it belonged to the Empress Joséphine."

"Let us see it, sir."

"Get it!" said the employer to a clerk; "it is at my house."—

"I should be very much better satisfied to see it," replied the Englishwoman. This reply was a triumph, because this exasperating woman seemed on the point of going. She appeared not to see the shawls, she was so occupied looking at the clerks and the two buyers hypocritically, while shading her eyes with the handle of her eye-glass.

"It cost sixty thousand francs in Turkey, madame."

"Oh!"

"It is one of seven shawls sent by Selim, before his disasters, to the Emperor Napoléon. The Empress Joséphine, a Creole, who, as my lady knows, was very capricious, exchanged it for one brought over by the Turkish ambassador and which my predecessor had bought; but I have never found anyone willing to give its price; because, in France, *our ladies* are not rich enough; it is not here as it is in England. This shawl is worth seven thousand francs, which really represents fourteen or fifteen compound interest."—

"Compounded of what?" said the Englishwoman.

—"Here it is, madame."

And the shopkeeper, having taken those precautions which the leaders of the *Green Vaults of Dresden* would have admired, opened with a very small key a box of carved cedar-wood, the effect of which produced a deep impression on the Englishwoman. From this box, lined with black satin, he brought out a shawl worth about fifteen hundred francs, of a golden yellow with black figures, whose splendor could only be surpassed by the eccentricity of the Indian invention.

"Splendid!" cried the Englishwoman; "it is indeed beautiful.—This is my ideal shawl! it is very magnificent—"

The rest was lost in a Madonna-like pose which

she took in order to show her cold eyes, which she considered handsome.

"The Emperor Napoléon liked it very much; he used it—"

"Very well," she replied.

She took the shawl, wrapped it around her and examined herself. The owner took the shawl, and seeing at last light through this problem, the hobby, made it show to good advantage; he played with it as Liszt played the piano.

"This is very fine, beautiful, sweet!" said the Englishwoman, with a perfectly tranquil air.

Duronceret, Bixiou, and the clerks exchanged looks of delight which signified:

"The shawl is sold."

"Well, madame?" asked the merchant, seeing the Englishwoman absorbed in lengthy contemplation.

"I prefer a carriage," she said, on thinking it over.

The silent and attentive clerks started as if touched by electricity.

"I have a very beautiful one, madame," quietly replied the shopkeeper, "which came to me from a Russian Princess, the Princess Narzicof, who left it with me in payment for furniture; if madame cares to see it, she will be surprised: it is new, having only been put away ten days, and it has not its equal in Paris."

The amazement of the clerks was only held in check by their admiration.

"I would much like to see it," she replied.

"If madame would keep the shawl on," said the shopkeeper, "she can see the effect in the carriage."

He then took his gloves and his hat. "How will it end?"—said the chief clerk, seeing his employer offering his hand to the Englishwoman and going away with her in the cab.

This savored of a romantic finish to Duronceret and Bixiou, beyond the interest attached to all contests, even small ones, between England and France.

Twenty minutes later the employer returned.

"Go to the Hôtel Lawson, here is the card: 'Mrs. Noswell.' Carry this bill I will give to you, and receive six thousand francs."

"And how have you done it?" said Duronceret, saluting this king of invoices.

"Eh! sir, I have seen this kind of eccentric woman; she likes to be remarked: when she saw everyone looking at her shawl, she said to me, 'upon reflection, keep your carriage, sir; I take the shawl.'"

"While Monsieur Bigorneau," said he, pointing to the romantic clerk, "was showing her the shawls, I studied my customer; she was much more interested in discerning your opinion of her. She thought more of you than of the shawls. The Englishwoman has a particular distaste — because it cannot be called taste — in not knowing what she wants and is determined to buy as soon as she finds a bargain. I have known such women to tire of their husbands, their children, sadly conscientious, in

search of sensations, and always posing as weeping willows."—

That is literally what the chief of the establishment said.

This proves that a shopkeeper in other countries is not so much of a shopkeeper as in France, and above all in Paris; he is a man from the royal college, educated, loving the arts, or fishing, or the theatre, or filled with the desire to be the successor to Monsieur Cunin-Gridaine, or colonel of the National Guard, or member of the Council General of the Seine, or president of the Tribune of Commerce.

"Monsieur Adolphe," said the wife of the manufacturer to his little blond clerk, "go order a box of cedar-wood at the toy makers—"

"And," said the clerk while escorting out Duronceret and Bixiou, who had chosen a shawl for Madame Schontz, "we will go to see among our old shawls one which will take the place of the shawl of Selim."

Paris, November, 1844.

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